



Guidelines for the Emeritus/Emerita Designation

There are several ways that congregations, presbyteries, other councils, and organizations with validated ministries express appreciation for the Teaching Elders serving them in ministry.

Designating a Pastor Emeritus/Emerita

Appreciation of the ministry of the pastor includes listening closely to their preaching, supporting the pastor and family, and giving consistent affirmation of the person's life and work. When a pastor retires or leaves a congregation, it is possible that the congregation will want to affirm the pastor's ministry by naming that person as Pastor Emeritus or Pastor Emerita.

As a pastor prepares for retirement, the pastor and the session will participate with the Connecting Our Ministry Commission in a process called "Guidelines to Develop a Covenant for Graceful Transitions, Future Relationships." This covenant will guide all parties in making decisions that are healthy for the congregation and healthy for the retiring pastor. When the next pastor arrives, the COM will convene a conversation between the retired pastor (if still in the area) and the incoming pastor to revisit this covenant.

A part of the process may include the desire of the congregation to name the pastor as Emeritus/Emerita. This is an appropriate way to honor a particularly long and/or significant pastorate, particularly upon retirement from active ministry. There is no dishonor in not naming a pastor to emeritus/emerita status; neither is the title to be seen granting any continuing privilege. It is a way to say, "thank you" and to express appreciation of the ministry of a pastor. The position of Pastor Emerita/Pastor Emeritus is largely honorific. It rarely comes with a financial honorarium, and it rarely involves any active expression of ministry.

The session may initiate the process for the Presbytery to approve the former pastor as "Pastor Emerita/us" by submitting the application to the Connecting our Ministry Commission. The application may be part of the retirement process, or it may be initiated later.

The COM will consider the application at their next meeting and may designate representatives to meet with the session or representatives of the session. A decision will be made in a timely manner. The COM, however, may defer a decision if it believes the decision could adversely affect the congregation during the transitional period. In this case, the request will be re-visited by the session and the COM at a later date. In all cases, the process involves direct conversation between COM, the session, the former pastor, and any new pastor about boundaries, roles, and the meaning of the title.

If the COM authorizes the request, the Session may then call a congregational meeting to elect the former pastor to "Pastor Emerita/Pastor Emeritus." The title will be reviewed annually by the COM and

may be rescinded by COM if in, the judgement of the COM, the title is not healthy for the life of the congregation.

Designating a Presbytery Staff Member as Emeritus/Emerita

When a person is leaving presbytery service, she/he and the Connecting Our Ministry Commission will participate in in a process called “Guidelines to Develop a Covenant for Graceful Transitions, Future Relationships.”

This covenant will guide all parties in making decisions that are healthy for the presbytery and healthy for the person leaving service. When a new person arrives, the COM will convene a conversation between the previous and the incoming individuals to revisit this covenant.

When a Teaching Elder or Ruling Elder retires or leaves a position with the presbytery, it is possible that the presbytery will want to affirm the person’s ministry by naming them as Emeritus or Emerita. This would most typically involve the office of Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk but is not limited to those positions.

This is an appropriate way to honor a particularly long and/or significant service. There is no dishonor in not designating Emeritus/Emerita status; neither is the title to be seen granting any continuing privilege. It is a way to say, “thank you” and to express appreciation of the ministry. The designation of Emerita/Emeritus is honorific. It does not include a financial honorarium, or involve any active expression of ministry, unless explicitly specified.

The Presbytery Leader Team may initiate the process for the Presbytery to approve the Teaching/Ruling Elder leaving service as Emerita/Emeritus by submitting the application to the Connecting our Ministry Commission. The application may be part of the retirement process, or it may be initiated later.

The COM will consider the application at their next meeting and may designate representatives to meet with the Presbytery Leader Team. A decision will be made in a timely manner. The COM, however, may defer a decision if it believes the decision could adversely affect the presbytery during the transitional period. In this case, the request will be re-visited by the session and the COM at a later date. In all cases, the process involves direct conversation between COM, the Presbytery Leader Team, the former individuals in presbytery service, and the new persons about boundaries, roles, and the meaning of the title.

If the COM authorizes the request, the Presbytery Leader Team may include the designation of Emerita/Emeritus on the docket of an upcoming Presbytery Gathering. The title will be reviewed annually by the COM and may be rescinded by the COM if in, the judgement of the COM, the title is not healthy for the life of the Presbytery.

Designating a Teaching/Ruling Elder in a Validated Position as Emeritus/Emerita

In some rare circumstances, an organization may wish to designate a Teaching/Ruling Elder serving in a validated ministry position as Emeritus/Emerita.

This might be in a position in a higher council of the church, or in another position. If these designations exist within the organization, and the organization has internal procedures to follow, then the presbytery will celebrate the designation at an upcoming gathering of the presbytery.

If the organization requests that the presbytery participate in the designation of emeritus/emerita, then the procedure for application and consultation outlined above will be followed by the Connecting our Ministry Commission, as appropriate for the situation.

Application for Designation of Emerita/us

Name of Teaching/Ruling Elder: _____

Name of Church or Organization: _____

Name of Group Requesting the Designation: _____

(i.e. Session, Leader Team, Governance Group)

Years served: _____

1. Why are you making this application? What benefits would this designation bring to the life and health of your congregation or organization?
 2. What are some of the personal attributes that the Teaching/Ruling Elder has brought to his/her call at your church that distinguishes his/her service and support a designation of Emerita/Emeritus
 3. Discuss some of the lasting contributions that the person has made to your congregation or organization. Have there been any particular times including times of transition or challenge, when the person provided exemplary leadership or other important skills?

4. Are there any other attributes or achievements that should be taken into consideration (service to denomination, leadership in community)?

 5. Describe what the designation of Emeritus/Emerita will entail:
 - a. Is the title honorific or are there any responsibilities?
 - b. Is there any compensation?
 - c. How would the Emeritus/Emerita status be conferred and communicated?
 - d. What other factors are there to consider about impact on the congregation/organization?

Application Prepared By:

Name: _____ Position: _____

Application approved by the Session, Presbytery Leader Team or other governance group:

Date:

Clerk of Session or Stated Clerk Name: