## Pastor Emerita/Emeritus Policy

### Pastor Emeritus, Emerita

When any pastor or associate pastor retires, and the congregation is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary relationship, it may, at a regularly called congregational meeting, elect him or her as pastor emeritus or emerita, with or without honorarium, but with no pastoral authority or duty. This action shall be taken only after consultation with the Commission on Ministry concerning the wisdom of this relationship for the peace of the church. This action shall be subject to the approval of presbytery, and may take effect upon the formal dissolution of the pastoral or associate pastoral relationship or anytime thereafter.

### Guidelines for COM for determining when designation of Emerita/us is appropriate

The assignment stems out of the concern that too many emerita/us titles are being conferred and that COM needs some guidelines to ensure that the designation is appropriate and meaningful, when it is working with congregations that want to so honor their former pastors. What standards should be applied; what attributes, achievements or contributions should the Pastor have made to the Church served in order to warrant the designation?

The calling to serve God and the church is inherently different than service in other professions. Pastors’ best and most valuable work may be in private, may be unknown to the public, and even to many in the congregation. While there may be good cause for limiting the use of the Emerita/us title, and in doing so making the attempt to articulate minimum qualifications, Pastors should not necessarily be denied the designation because of a lack of *quantifiable* distinctions.

While there is an expectation of general respect and affection between pastor and congregation, conferring of Emerita/us status is a special honor that is reserved for pastors who have served their churches with extraordinary distinction.

### The Process

COM takes seriously its responsibility to ascertain, in consultation with the congregation, whether a proposed designation is appropriate. This determination requires substantive evidence that the honor is merited for the retired pastor being considered; and consideration of whether the designation could adversely affect the ongoing life of the congregation.

Application can be submitted to COM as early as one year after the date of the former Pastor’s departure. COM may defer a decision if it is of the opinion that the decision could adversely affect the congregation during the transitional period. A determination will be made by Presbytery no later than 6 months after the installation of a new Pastor.

Responses to the application questions may be considered and answered by an individual or group designated by the Session/Council. The resulting document will be approved, at a congregational meeting, by at least 2/3 of the membership, and forwarded to the Presbytery.