



Pastor Emerita/Emeritus Policy
Adopted by Commission on Transitional Ministries
March 15, 2022

When any pastor or associate pastor retires and the congregation is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary relationship, the congregation may choose to confer upon the former pastor the title of Pastor Emerita/Emeritus, with or without honorarium, but may not confer pastoral authority or duty.

Guidelines for determining when designation of emerita/emmeritus is appropriate

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

The calling to serve God and the church is inherently different from service in other professions. A pastor's best and most valuable work might be in private and unknown to the public, even to many in the congregation. Pastors should not necessarily be denied the designation because of a lack of quantifiable distinctions.

A time of separation before considering conferring this title is important. To immediately confer upon the pastor's retirement is generally not appropriate because it can undermine the Covenant of Closure needed for a healthy transition and can diminish the true honorary nature of the emerita/emmeritus status.

The Process

Barring exceptional circumstances, the Session may submit a request to CTM for approval to call a congregational meeting for a vote on conferring emerita/emmeritus status no earlier than one year after the pastor's retirement. This request must include evidence that the honor is merited, must document consideration of whether the designation could adversely affect the ongoing life of the congregation, and must include the Session's designation of a person or people to answer questions from CTM.

CTM takes seriously its responsibility to ascertain, in consultation with the congregation, whether a proposed designation is appropriate. Therefore, CTM may choose to defer a decision if it believes that the decision could adversely affect the congregation during the transitional period. However, a determination will be made by CTM no later than 6 months after the installation of a new pastor.

Once the request is approved, the Session will call a congregational meeting to vote on conferring the emerita/emmeritus status and the motion must be approved by a 2/3 vote by secret ballot. A record of the motion and vote must be sent back to CTM for the title to be recorded.