



“From Where I Sit ...”

Retirement Policy Revision – Benefits to Retired “Supply” Pastors

Over the past 30 years, the ministry of the CME Church has significantly changed from what one would call a “full employment” model to our present model where, in many cases, pulpits would go empty if not for the opportunity for Bishops to call upon retired pastors to fill some of the ranks. Although we have a surplus of local deacons and elders and often unassigned preachers in full connection, many have chosen not to avail themselves for pastoral assignments or many have not impressed “their” leaders that they are prepared to handle the responsibility for a needed pastoral assignment.

This situation is a factor outside of the lanes of the purview of the General Board of Personnel Services; however, its existence does impact how our Board addresses its mission in service to the ministry of the CME Church. When the guidelines and policies for the CME Retirement Plan were designed, there existed this “full employment” model. Able and reasonably experienced pastors were available for almost every church throughout our Connection. As such, when a pastor retired, received his/her 12% accumulated retirement benefits and his/her retirement account was closed, the church no longer paid a 12% contribution for the retired pastor. Instead, another younger, active pastor was ready to take their place and for whom the church would pay their 12% retirement contributions. In the meantime, a retired pastor would then only be called upon for a “supply” [or temporary] appointment for an interim period due to some seldom, unforeseen occurrence.

However, that was then and our now is quite different! Our leaders are having to called on retired pastors to not only accept full-year assignments but to accept them year-after-year, in many cases. Because this has become so common, our Board needed to address how the policy for Retirement contributions paid by churches whose pastors were retired should be addressed in a manner that protected both the pastor, the church and the ministry.

Because the law states that each church shall pay an amount equal to 12% and because the account of a retired pastor would have been closed at his/her retirement; effective in 2019, our Board will refund to any retired pastor the 12% contribution paid into the Plan for that pastor (less the 20% withheld for taxes). Such a process permits applicable churches to continue the practice of paying 12% rather than having to start anew when an “active” pastor is assigned. It also allows the pastor a more appropriate and legitimate means to receive the 12% intentionally set aside for the benefit of the pastor.

The times in which we live, and the circumstances of our administrations have changed. As such and, where practical, our policies will also change if we are to continue to address our mission and our purpose for being. *Or at least that’s the way it looks to me...*

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(Copies of earlier articles may be found on the
Personnel Services Webpage of the CME Website at www.thecmechurch.org)