

“From Where I Sit ...”



The Church’s Law and Retirement!

Chapter 29; ¶450, §2 of THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE OF THE CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH – 2018, page 119 states, *“Members of the Judicial Council, General Officers, Presiding Elders, Pastors and all other of the clergy rank shall be automatically retired at the Conference of authority nearest their seventy-fourth (74th) birthday; provided, that any Minister who has been in the itinerant service for ten (10) years or more, upon reaching the age of sixty-five (65) and upon expressing a desire to do so in writing may have the right of retirement at the next Annual Conference by vote of the clergy members in full connection. ...”*

Simply stated, this section describes, for all clergy persons and those lay persons who serve as Judicial Council Justices or as General Officers, the two specific occasions for retirement: 1) the optional occasion at the request of the person who is 65 and, for clergy, has served at least 10 itinerant years; and 2) the mandatory occasion which automatically occurs at the person’s conference of authority nearest their 74th birthday. Also ¶435 generally expresses a similar retirement schedule for the Bishops of the Church.



From our records, most pastors plan for their retirement at 74 or for whichever age is their mandatory date, while others opt to retire between 65 and 73. Choosing the earlier dates are often influenced by reasons of health or finance and require a request and a vote of the clergy members of their respective annual conference. However, the mandatory date requires no explanation or justification. Whether announced, acknowledged, affirmed, or ceremonially celebrated, the act and fact of retirement OCCURS at the meeting of the conference of “authority”. Even if nothing is said or done, per the language of the Discipline, the retirement has occurred because it was “automatic” as stated in ¶450.



And although some ministers may be “continued in service” after retirement, their status is still retired and, with uninterrupted membership in the CME Church, continues to remain as retired.

A good understanding of the above is important because retirement, per the Discipline, in most cases, is a necessary step for a Retirement Participant to receive or rollover the accumulated funds in their CME Retirement account. Understanding the above explanation will help simplify, for participants of the CME Retirement Plan, the process of retirement when that time occurs. ***Or at least that’s the way it looks to me...***

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