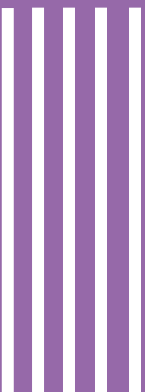




# Ministry after retiring from office

*Issued in September 2021 by the Remuneration and  
Conditions of Service Committee of the  
Archbishops' Council, after approval at the House  
of Bishops Delegation Committee*





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“Priests are ordained to lead God's people in the offering of praise and the proclamation of the gospel. They share with the bishop in the oversight of the church, delighting in its beauty and rejoicing in its well-being. They are to set the example of the Good Shepherd always before them as the pattern of their calling. With the bishop and their fellow presbyters, they are to sustain the community of the faithful by the ministry of word and sacrament, that we all may grow into the fullness of Christ and be a living sacrifice acceptable to God.”

## Common Worship Ordination Service



# Introduction

Ordination to the Priesthood, in the Church of England, is understood as a life-long vocation. You remain ordained as a priest after retiring from office and have a vocation to ministry even if it takes a different form in retirement. Retirement does not mean that the demands of your vocation have ceased, although your ministry may take a different form, which may include new challenges.

The ministry that clergy exercise after retirement from office depends on the needs of the Church in a particular place, and their talents and capability (which may change as they get older), but there are many ways in which you can support the mission and ministry of the diocese while having permission to officiate. Being given PTO does not mean that your ministry is limited to providing short-term cover or taking weddings and funerals.

You may therefore wish to continue to offer a ministry in retirement, freed from some of the formal and administrative business of being a parish priest or sector minister. Retired clergy are a reservoir of theological, spiritual, pastoral and other experience, and the mission of the Church benefits greatly from the ministry of those retired clergy who wish and feel able to continue to offer a ministry.

**We hope that this guidance will enable you to think about what ministry you might wish to exercise in retirement and make the necessary plans for this.**



# What I need to think about in planning for my retirement?

Planning for retirement will involve lots of decisions, including where you will be living. You may find it helpful to look at the Pensions Board guide on planning for retirement which will provide information about your pension: [Clergy planning for retirement - July 2020.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](#)

## Where will I live?

**You are expected, and advised for your own sake, to move an appropriate distance from your last parish on retirement from office.** This is to enable your parishioners to establish a relationship with their new priest and the new priest to develop their new ministry without feeling inhibited.

If you think you might need assistance with retirement housing from the Pensions Board, you should check your eligibility, as you will need to have completed 15 years of stipendiary service by the time you retire. You also need to start conversations with the Pensions Board about at least 5 years ahead of retirement, as this helps the Pensions Board to plan in advance and match its supply of housing to the likely needs of clergy. Once discussions have started, and suitable housing has been found, the housing can, if necessary, be let on a short term basis to another party, while you continue to exercise your office and live in a provided house until you retire from stipendiary ministry.

## Different paths towards retirement from office

There are many different paths towards retirement from office, and some clergy choose to move directly on retirement from full time stipendiary office to permission to officiate on pension, but others may prefer a more gradual path, moving from full-time to part-time stipendiary ministry, or offering themselves for self-supporting ministry while holding an office, before retirement from office on PTO.

Many clergy will choose to take a 6-month break at retirement and give themselves time to settle into their new house, forge links with their parish, and adjust to no longer being in charge of a parish. A few may wish to continue to exercise an authorised ministry without a break, so that they are able to preside at the Eucharist on retiring from office. If they wish to do this, they will need to apply for PTO in good time, and have developed a relationship with the incumbent of their new parish in advance of retirement



## Self supporting ministers in retirement

SSMs who exercised ministry on PTO, or on a part time basis, because they were employed in another role, may find, when they have retired from employment, that they have more time to give towards their ministry. They may wish at this point to consider whether they have a call to offer a ministry outside the parish where they live.

## Do I need to retire at a certain age?

Your clergy pension comes with a 'normal retirement age'. This is age 68. At this point it is possible for you to retire on pension without any reduction in retirement benefits for early retirement.

This should not be confused with the age when you are required by the Clergy Age Limit Measure to vacate your office at 70. You may retire before 70, provided that you give the bishop three months' notice. It is often worthwhile having informal discussions about retirement plans in advance.

Although it is possible to remain in office (and continue to accrue pensionable service<sup>1</sup>) after 70 in certain circumstances, this is likely to be the exception rather than the norm. You may not hold office after 70, unless the bishop has issued the appropriate direction, and this is a decision for the bishop, who is required to have regard to guidance at [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/ac-age-limit-measure-guidance-for-website-october-2017\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/ac-age-limit-measure-guidance-for-website-october-2017_0.pdf).

The Bishop is required to have evidence of the PCC's consent in the form of a written minute, and clergy should be absent from the PCC when this is discussed

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<sup>1</sup> Up to maximum benefits in the scheme. These depend on when you started pensionable service. For most clergy, this will be between 37 and 41.5 years. Contact the Pensions Board to find out your maximum service.



## What forms of ministry can I carry out in retirement?

Any ministry that you choose to exercise after retirement from office will depend on the needs of the Church in a particular place, your talents and capability (which may change as you get older), but there are many ways in which you can support the mission and ministry of your bishop and your parish priest whilst having permission to officiate.

As well as providing short-term cover or taking weddings and funerals, these include the following:

- helping out with projects in the diocese such as estates regeneration, Renewal and Reform, and ministry to children
- providing temporary one-off cover for long term periods of authorised absence (for example, sabbatical or long-term sickness)
- mentoring other clergy and helping to train them
- additional support for a particular parish for a fixed period when requested by the bishop
- taking on a diocesan role (for example as retirement or widow(er)s officer) on a voluntary basis
- providing confidential pastoral support at the request of the bishop for clergy who are undergoing the capability procedure or who are subject to proceedings under the Clergy Discipline Measure
- spiritual direction, mentoring or work consultation (e.g. a retired cleric with experience of church schools can be of considerable help to an incumbent coming new to this specialised area)
- conducting retreats or quiet days
- acting as an outside consultant/teacher/facilitator for parishes (e.g. for PCC away days, stewardship campaigns, Lent groups and house groups)
- participating in missions, staffing CMD and ordination courses, or participating as a peer reviewer in MDR
- representing the diocese or the Church of England on various bodies or visits (e.g. an overseas diocese linked with the diocese, a charity, or a secular organisation).

You must have authority from the bishop if you are to exercise any public ministry in retirement, even on an occasional basis, and will need to bear the following in mind.

- The purpose of all ministry is to further the Kingdom. Being true to your vocation in retirement should not be about retaining your status as minister or needing to feel busy, or a means of increasing your pension provision or giving you access to provided housing after retirement.



- Most clergy are authorised to carry out their ministry in retirement by being given permission to officiate by the bishop. Holding office after 70 is the exception not the norm.
- When given PTO, you carry out your ministry at the invitation of the incumbent or priest in charge, who may decide what ministry, if any, you should have in the parish. You must respect this.

Some things that you can do in retirement do not involve public ministry, are not directly connected with the diocese, and do not require permission to officiate, for example, writing books, doing voluntary work for Christian and other charities, or working for missionary societies at home or abroad etc.

You may prefer to take on a new secular role in retirement or you may not wish to continue to exercise ministry for other reasons. There is no need to feel uncomfortable about this.

The nature of the ministry you are able to exercise after retirement from office is likely to continue to change during your retirement. For example, you may need to exercise a leadership role during an interregnum for a period, and then step back when the new incumbent is appointed.

Your ministry under PTO will need to be reviewed when your PTO is due for renewal, which will be subject to DBS and safeguarding checks. What you are able to do will depend on your state of health, your family commitments, as well as your talents and previous experience. If you are looking for a ministry that involves more than providing cover and taking occasional offices, it may be important to remember that Bishops will be more likely to approach clergy who support and are engaged with their vision for the diocese.

# How do I apply for permission to officiate?

If you wish to continue your ministry after retirement, you need to apply for permission to officiate from your diocesan bishop. Find out more at:

[www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/House%20of%20Bishops%20Policy%20on%20PTO%20July%202018.pdf](http://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/House%20of%20Bishops%20Policy%20on%20PTO%20July%202018.pdf)

Obtaining PTO, especially if you have moved to a new diocese on retirement, may take some time, as moving to a new diocese will require a further DBS check. You will be unable to exercise any ministry at all until the safeguarding checks and necessary training have been completed and the bishop has granted you PTO. You need to bear this in mind when planning for retirement.

Most clergy will wish to take a six-month break on retirement from office and wait until they have moved to a new house before applying for PTO. This will give you time to adjust to retirement, build links with local clergy and people in the deanery and diocese, and develop a clearer picture of where you might wish to help and where your help may be required.

Some clergy wish to be able to preside and preach as soon as they have retired. In this case you will need to apply for PTO well before retirement. Expectations of the ministry you will have in retirement should be agreed with the designated responsible person, who will usually be the incumbent or priest in charge. These can then be reviewed and updated as your ministry changes and develops. You will therefore need to have met the incumbent or priest in charge of the parish where you are intending to worship to discuss what sort of ministry you might have, before you move.

## Moving diocese in retirement

If you are moving to a new diocese in retirement, you may find it helpful to ask the old diocese to inform the new diocese about your move, and to arrange for the new diocese to inform the retirement officer and the priest in charge or incumbent of your new parish that a clergyperson who has applied for PTO has moved into their parish. This will enable the area/rural dean and the incumbent or priest in charge of the parish where you will be living to meet you and welcome you to the deanery, when you move into your retirement home. If you have not heard from the bishop of your new diocese, you may find it helpful to take the initiative and contact the bishop or a retirement officer direct. You can then meet the bishop, or a member of his or her senior team, to discuss the level of ministry that you are able to offer.





# Timeline for retirement

<b>As early in your ministry as possible</b>	Ask your diocese if you can attend a financial well-being course and start to save and plan financially for retirement
<b>5 years before retirement</b>	Discussions take place about planning for retirement as part of MDR  Attend a diocesan pre-retirement course  If you need help with retirement housing, make first contact with the Pensions Board  Meet group of recently retired clergy in the diocese to share experience
<b>2 years before retirement</b>	Start speaking to the Pensions Board about how much your Clergy pension is likely to be
<b>At least 3 months before retirement</b>	Give your formal notice to your bishop and tell your parish
<i>If applying for PTO before retiring</i>	Explore with your new incumbent or area dean/archdeacon what duties might be suitable in retirement  <i>This may happen after retirement, but if clergy wish to exercise ministry immediately after retirement, they will need to discuss this with their new incumbent in good time before retirement</i>  Apply for permission to officiate  <i>It may take up to 4 months to get DBS clearance. See the House of Bishops policy on permission to officiate</i>



**At retirement**

Pre-retirement interview includes reflection on previous ministry and, if staying in the same diocese, discussion of any future ministry

Incumbents are required to leave the parsonage house when they cease to hold office, unless they receive permission to stay on. Priests in charge and assistant curates are required to leave the parsonage house within one month of ceasing to hold office, unless they receive permission to stay on

**During retirement**

*If applying for PTO*

Clergy Current Status Letter and references obtained (if moving from another diocese)

Permission to officiate granted (for a period until the next DBS check is due)

Face to face induction with diocesan safeguarding officer if moving to a new diocese

Designated responsible person (usually the priest's incumbent or priest in charge) appointed and statement of expectations agreed

Permission to officiate granted, and clergy can preside and preach

Regular reviews when PTO is due for renewal





## Holding office after the age of 70

Most clergy, on retirement, will exercise ministry on permission to officiate, but, in exceptional circumstances, at the Bishop's discretion, clergy may continue for a fixed period to hold office after the retirement age, although this is likely to be the exception rather than the norm. It is even possible in certain circumstances to take up a new stipendiary post when retired and in receipt of pension<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless, it is not intended to be standard practice for clergy to remain in office after 70. This is ultimately a decision for the Bishop. If the Bishop wishes to enable someone to remain in office after 70, he or she must

- issue a direction under Reg 29A of the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009
- consider that the pastoral needs of the parish or the diocese make it desirable
- have regard to the guidance issued by the Archbishops' Council before issuing a direction
- require the cleric to have an occupational health assessment (unless there has already been one within the last 12 months)
- obtain the consent of the relevant PCC or PCCs.

The appointment may only be held for a fixed term, although it may be renewed or extended (in which case, a new direction is required). The purpose of this provision is to enable those who wish to continue to work beyond the age of 70 to do so, where there is an appropriate place for them to use their talents, but with an inbuilt mechanism to enable both the bishop and the office holder to review the position at stated intervals. This is a means of enabling people who still have a ministry to offer the Church to do so and is not intended to be a means of enhancing pension provision or keeping people busy in retirement.

The provisions for clergy over 70 are different for parochial and non-parochial appointments.

- Clergy over 70 may also be appointed to another office as incumbent, priest in charge or assistant curate, again on a renewable, time-limited basis without any maximum age, provided that the appropriate direction is issued.
- Suffragan bishops and deans may continue in office beyond the age of 70, up to a maximum of 75, by a direction from the diocesan bishop, with the agreement of the archbishop; but they may not be newly appointed to the office after the age of 70.

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<sup>2</sup> Subject to a clear break between the last period of stipendiary pensionable service and any post-retirement stipendiary service



- Archdeacons and residentiary canons may continue in office beyond the age of 70, up to a maximum of 75, by a direction of the diocesan bishop; but they may not be newly appointed to the office after the age of 70.
- Diocesan bishops may continue in office beyond the age of 70, up to a maximum of 75, by a direction from the archbishop; but they may not be newly appointed to the office of diocesan bishop after the age of 70.

## Frequently asked questions

### **What if I am over 70 and wish to apply for a new appointment?**

Applications for parochial appointments from clergy over 70 will be considered in the same way as those from other clergy. Clergy over 70 must not be excluded from consideration simply on grounds of age (as that is a protected characteristic): the only difference is that, if the applicant over 70 is appointed, the term of the office must be time-limited (but renewable) and the bishop will need to arrange for an occupational health assessment to be carried out and to form a view for the purposes of regulation 29A(9) (see above) before issuing a direction.

### **What if I am approaching 70 and wish to apply for a new appointment?**

Clergy who are not yet 70 may also apply for offices, and will not need a bishop's direction to be appointed if the appointment takes effect before they reach the age of 70. If they are the best candidate, they should be offered the post, subject to an occupational health assessment. However, the bishop is not under any obligation to extend the term of their office once they reach 70. Once they reach 70, they will need to retire unless the bishop makes a direction. If an occupational health assessment took place less than 12 months before their 70th birthday, the bishop may issue a direction without a further occupational health assessment provided that the last assessment took place within the last 12 months, and the bishop has ascertained that the office holder is carrying out his or her duties effectively.

### **What if the Bishop refuses to issue a direction, or decides not to issue a further direction, even though the parish want me to stay?**

The Bishop is required to have regard to the pastoral needs of the parish, as well as considering whether the office holder is capable of continuing to exercise his or her duties. In some circumstances, it may be beneficial for the parish to have a change of leadership, even if the priest has had a long and successful ministry in the parish.

### **If I am staying in my post after 70, do I need to contact the Pensions Board if I am likely to require housing assistance on retirement?**

Yes. You should contact the Pensions Board well in advance of retirement, as it takes a long time to obtain suitable housing. Once discussions have started, and suitable housing has been found, the housing can, if necessary, be let on a short-term basis to



another party, while the office holder continues to live in a provided house and exercise office.

### **Can I continue to receive a stipend after reaching 70?**

Yes. If your post is stipendiary, you may continue to receive a stipend after reaching 70.

### **Can I continue to accrue pensionable service after reaching 70?**

Provided that you have not already retired and opted to receive your pension, you will continue to accrue pensionable service as long as you are in a stipendiary post until you have accrued the maximum benefits under the scheme. Maximum service depends on when you started pensionable service. For most clergy, this will be between 37 and 41.5 years. Contact the Pensions Board to find out your maximum service.

### **If I am already receiving a pension, is it possible to be paid a stipend in addition?**

Clergy in receipt of pension may be appointed to regulation 29 posts and receive a stipend if the post is stipendiary<sup>3</sup>. However, you are unable to accrue more pensionable service under the clergy pension scheme, because you are already receiving pension.

If you are not accruing pensionable service in the clergy pension scheme (the Church of England Funded Pension Scheme – CEFPS), the payment of stipend (or a housing allowance) may, however, result in your being automatically enrolled into a pension scheme if you fulfil certain eligibility conditions although you will be able to opt out if you do not want to make further pension contributions.

If you are not automatically eligible, you may also have the right to opt-in to the automatic enrolment compliant pension scheme operated on behalf of stipendiary clergy not entitled to accrue further pensionable service in CEFPS.

### **I hold parochial office. What if I wish to remain in my current office after 70?**

Following amendments to the Age Limit Measure in the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Amendment Regulations 2017, the same provisions apply to incumbents as to priests in charge and assistant curates. It is therefore now possible for clergy over 70 to remain in office as incumbent (or apply for positions as incumbent), provided that the bishop issues the appropriate direction, after obtaining written evidence of the PCC's consent in the form of a minute of the discussion, at which you were not present.

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<sup>3</sup> Subject to a clear break between the last period of stipendiary pensionable service and any post-retirement stipendiary service



If you are on freehold, you may only remain in office for up to two years after your retirement age, but, if you move onto common tenure, it may be possible

### **What if I am on a contract of employment?**

Clergy who are on contracts of employment, unlike office holders, have the same rights as other employees. They may not be compulsorily retired on grounds of age and may continue in employment after they reach pension age.

### **What if I am under 70, but have retired on pension and want to take up a stipendiary post?**

You may take up a post (whether stipendiary or not) but will be required to relinquish it at 70, unless the bishop issues a direction that you stay in office after 70.

### **If I have ceased office at 70 and wish to keep accruing pension and obtain a stipendiary post under regulation 29, may I defer taking my pension?**

The general rule is that a pension would come into payment once someone has reached the age of 68 and ceases service in a post that would be pensionable under the scheme. However, there might be scope, in exceptional circumstances, for regarding the service as continuous, where the gap between ceasing in one post and starting another was not more than 3 months. This would be subject to the discretion of the Pensions Board.

### **What is the age at which I am eligible to receive pension?**

The age under which clergy are required to retire should not be confused with the scheme pension age. The pension scheme's "normal pension age" (the age from which benefits can be paid without any reduction for early payment) is now 68 in respect of pensionable service completed from 1 January 2011. Benefits earned before that date retain a "normal -pension age" of 65 and would not be reduced if taken at or after that age. The rules of the scheme require members:

1. to have resigned from their post or position before they can draw benefits (although this will not necessarily prevent them subsequently being paid a stipend in a regulation 29 post at a later point)
2. to draw all their benefits at the same time, e.g. members who choose to retire at 65 would be required to take any benefits earned from 1 January 2011 as a pension and lump sum reduced for early retirement

This does not affect members' rights to retire at any age after 55 with an appropriate reduction to their benefits.

### **Will my pension be reduced if I receive other earnings?**

Pensions in payment may not be reduced or suspended if you receive earnings from ecclesiastical office or employment (including being offered a part of the fee due to the DBF for carrying out occasional offices), unless you retired due to ill health.



## Approval and review

Approved by	House of Bishops delegation committee
Policy owner	RACSC
Policy author	Patrick Shorrock
Date	Approved 2020 and issued September 2021
Review date	2023

## Revision history

Version no.	Revision date	Previous revision date	Summary of changes
1	2007		Most of this material is derived from an earlier guidance note on supporting the ministry of retired clergy first issued in 2007
2	2014	2007	Updated to take account of changes to parochial fees
3	2021	2014	Also amended to reflect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• House of Bishops Policy to officiate</li><li>• Changes to the Age Limit Measure</li></ul> Changes that allow any authorised member of the clergy to conduct any funeral if requested to do so by the family