

Chapter 27 | Retirement Planning and Relationships

For more information, contact the relationship manager (conference liaison) for your conference at Wespath Benefits and Investments (formerly General Board of Pension and Health Benefits) or GBHEM's Executive Director of Candidacy and Conference Relations at candidacy@gbhem.org or 615-340-7374.

Retirement Planning and Relationships

The BOM, along with the annual conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits (CBPHB), has responsibility for assisting clergy and spouses as they prepare for retirement. This responsibility includes pre-retirement counseling, providing guidance as clergy transition into a new relationship with the annual conference and assisting with the organization of groups to support clergy during retirement. (§358.4)

The BOM and the CBPHB may relate to the Annual Conference Association of Retired Ministers or similar organizations. BOMs shall take the initiative to assist retirees in establishing organizations if they do not exist.

BOM Relationship to Retired Clergy and Spouses

For many Annual Conferences the most visible reminder of this relationship is at the Annual Conference session when retired clergy and spouses are recognized. Many boards take an active role in planning this event, holding a dinner for the retirees and printing a program listing service to the church. However, many retirees may feel rather ignored by the church after this last recognition.

The Book of Discipline requires a liaison to retired clergy in the conference (§635.2k). GBHEM requests the name of the retired clergy liaison. A retired clergy on the board can take care of the needs and concerns of retired clergy and spouses by:

- Meeting with representatives from the retired clergy association, Cabinet, BOM and CBPHB to identify concerns and resources, to coordinate a conference response
- Keeping retired clergy, spouses and surviving spouses up-to-date with current pension, social security and health insurance information
- Inviting retired clergy and spouses to participate in district events
- Ensuring the availability of continuing education for retired clergy
- Developing a structure to enhance creative and productive use of the retirement years
- Surveying retired clergy and spouses on a quadrennial basis to discover their concerns and needs and their desires for serving in the conference

Ideas for BOM Consultation and Support

- Identify a BOM member to serve as the retired clergy liaison.
- Establish a cooperative relationship between the BOM and Wespath Benefits and Investments. Your conference benefits officer will know the Wespath liaison or relationship manager who is assigned to support your Annual Conference.
- Create and/or encourage participation in an Annual Conference retired clergy and spouses' association.
- Post current information on retirement issues, volunteer opportunities and job opportunities for clergy and their spouses on the conference website.
- Encourage local churches to plan a yearly retiree day.
- Develop a clergy/spouse volunteer talent pool to be available to both church and community.
- Foster multigenerational dialogue between youth/young adults and retired clergy/spouses.

People are living longer and healthier lives. Clergy often identify with their active role in the church. Retirement can significantly affect clergy's identity and self-image. Retirement is a transition, not termination, in ministry. Some clergy may feel as though retirement is a rejection of their call and vocation.

An initial step in an effective program is for the BOM members involved in pre-retirement assistance to articulate and model a theological understanding of retirement. Sometimes the ambivalence of BOM members about their own retirement can block development of an effective and helpful program.

Basic Considerations for a Pre-Retirement Planning Program

If your conference does not offer pre-retirement seminars, this list and the proposed seminar models at the end of this chapter can be a starting point. Consult with your CBPHB to develop a program and let Wespath know of your resource needs as you begin planning. Wespath has benefits education personnel who will participate in seminars. Wespath will also assist with communications materials and provide benefit projections for those registered for the seminar.

- Clarify responsibilities of the BOM and conference BPHB.
- Include retired clergy and spouses to draw upon their experience and those within five years of retirement to address questions they face.
- Include clergy and spouses in all planning. Survey those approaching retirement to learn their questions and identify areas requiring more information.
- Balance presentation time between practical considerations, such as pension, housing and health insurance concerns, and less tangible areas, such as psychological, spiritual and theological reflection on aging and retirement.
- Contact the Social Security Administration at www.ssa.gov/agency/ask-for-a-speaker.html for a speaker on Social Security retirement benefits.
- Your conference or area foundation may be able to provide a financial planner, investment advisor or estate planner, or to recommend a fee-based financial planner or investment advisor, to present at seminars. A fee-based planner or advisor will usually provide more objective information than someone who has a product to sell.
- Consider holding the same event at different locations.

- Consider midlife seminars for clergy and spouses 10-15 years from retirement; include financial planning for retirement.
- Consider early-career seminars for clergy and spouses in their first 5-15 years of ministry. Include personal financial planning concepts, debt management and techniques for saving for retirement. Retirement planning can never start too early.
- Helpful items least often included or given little attention:
 - Biblical-theological reflection on aging and retirement
 - Spiritual growth in retirement
 - Retired clergy ethics, how to build new kinds of relationships to a local church and its pastor, how to relate to the charge conference
 - Wellness approach to health in retirement years
 - New careers, hobbies, volunteerism in retirement
 - Managing new roles and personal time for clergy and spouse
 - Preparation for the loss of a spouse
 - Inclusion of diaconal ministers and other lay church professional workers
- Consider inserts in conference mailings that raise financial planning issues.
- Consider an annual conference display to publicize pre-retirement seminars and encourage planning early for retirement.
- Evaluate each seminar and use the evaluations in planning future events.

The BOM works with candidates and clergy throughout their ministry – from recruitment, application, evaluation of membership, conference relations decisions and retirement. As clergy transition from active to retired status, the BOM has the opportunity to support clergy in managing and thriving in this stage of ministry and life. The Annual Conference and general church have many resources for supporting BOMs as they development and implement a holistic, meaningful program of transition and ongoing support for retired clergy.

Appendix: Seminar Models

ONE DAY PRE-RETIREMENT SEMINAR

9:00 a.m.	Introduction and Purpose: A retired clergy and spouse
9:15 a.m.	Are You Planning to Live the Rest of Your Life? Psychological Development Stages, Sexual Relationships, Family: A Pastoral Counselor
10:15 a.m.	Break
10:30 a.m.	Financial Planning: A Certified Financial Planner® who is familiar with clergy financial and tax issues, or Wespath benefits education staff
12:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Investments: A bank officer or local financial advisor
2:15 p.m.	Social Security and Medicare: Social Security Administration representative or Wespath benefits education staff
3:00 p.m.	Break
3:15 p.m.	Pension Plan: Conference or Wespath representative
4:15 p.m.	Health Insurance: CBPHB representative
5:00 p.m.	Adjournment

AN OVERNIGHT PRE-RETIREMENT SEMINAR

First Day

11:00 a.m.	Arrival
12:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Welcome and overview
1:15 p.m.	Social Security and Medicare
2:00 p.m.	United Methodist Pension Program benefits
3:00 p.m.	Financial investment programs and legal concerns; estate planning
5:00 p.m.	Dinner and free-time
7:00 p.m.	Budget planning

Second Day

7:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:15 a.m.	Devotions
8:30 a.m.	Personal adjustment in retirement years
9:30 a.m.	Housing options
10:30 a.m.	Health and medical care
11:30 a.m.	Evaluation and closing worship
12:00 p.m.	Lunch and departure