

## Report from the Chaplaincy to Retired Clergy and Families *The Pittsburgh Silver Eagles*

### *A Little Background:*

The Pastoral Care Office of the Church Pension Fund asks the bishop of each diocese to appoint a volunteer *Chaplain to the Retired* to be an ongoing liaison for communication between the Fund and Clergy Pension Fund Beneficiaries who were canonically resident in the Diocese of Pittsburgh at the time of their retirement or who were canonically resident in another diocese at the time of their retirement but who are now physically resident within the geographical borders of our diocese. The Chaplain serves as well to supplement parish and diocesan pastoral care for retired clergy; for their wives, husbands, and families; and for the surviving widows and widowers and other family of clergy who have died. My and our good friend Arthur Dilg was appointed to this role in 2002--following the exemplary ministries of Chaplain predecessors like John Leggett and Aus Hurd—and served a remarkable 19 years. With Bishop McConnell’s consent Art passed along the baton to me in February of 2021--and Bishop Solak generously renewed my appointment when she became our diocesan bishop later that year.

### *Report for 2024:*

Our Pittsburgh “Silver Eagle flock” has a census that changes really month-by-month with the ebb and flow of life. New retirees are added, addresses change, and dear friends and colleagues are called Home. **A snapshot: as of September, 2024, I count on our Pittsburgh Pension Fund Roster 105 retired clergy, 79 wives and husbands of retired clergy, and 25 widows and widowers—so, a “Silver Eagle” total of 209.**

As Pittsburgh’s Retiree Chaplain I participate in a monthly Zoom conference with other Chaplains in Provinces I, II, and III and in occasional webinars provided by the Fund to educate us on the state of the Fund in general and then particularly on issues related to retiree benefits. There is also an annual in-person regional gathering and a once-every-three-years national gathering for education and support. It’s my hope that all this will continue to equip me to be helpful to our retiree and surviving spouse community when questions and concerns related to Pension Fund benefits arise. Often I know the answers to the questions folks ask—but if I don’t, I will always do my best to find someone “at Pension” who does!

I’m also available to clergy who are beginning to plan for retirement. Over a cup of coffee or at lunch I share what I can about Pension Fund retiree benefits and lend a hand to help “aspiring retirees” negotiate the sometimes complicated administrative, vocational, and personal process of transition from Active to Retired status.

**A special Pension Fund resource for our Pittsburgh retirees this year will take place on Thursday, December 5, at St. Paul’s in Mt. Lebanon, when a team from the Church Pension Fund will offer a program day, “Enriching Your Retirement.” All our retired**

**clergy, their wives and husbands, and our widows and widowers of clergy, will receive invitations. The purpose of the program is to educate us about the benefits available through the Fund and to discuss any pension and retirement questions and concerns.**

In addition to fielding questions and concerns about pension and medical benefits, I send somewhere between 20 and 40 birthday/anniversary/congratulations/get well/sympathy/and other cards and notes each month. I post occasional pastoral news and prayer requests to a “Silver Eagles” e-mail distribution list. I stay in touch with Bishops Solak and Cameron and Canons Kim Karashin and Bill Henry to assist them in their pastoral ministry with this segment of our clergy family—sometimes with an e-mail, Zoom chat, phone call, or home/hospital visit, sometimes over a cup of coffee or a lunch, etc. This year I also have been delighted to continue to collaborate with Silver Eagle Carol Henley in a First Friday of the Month “Zoom” fellowship group, *Pittsburgh Senior Clergy Connect*. This group is open to “senior” and retired clergy who are canonically resident in the Episcopal Diocese and especially to those who live near enough to be able to participate in occasional in-person gatherings.

When possible I also attend funerals for retired Pittsburgh clergy colleagues, and it is a special privilege to speak with the surviving spouses, children, and other family members and friends to express my and our prayerful thanksgiving and a word of Christian sympathy on behalf of the wider church. Since our last Convention in November of 2023 I count 5 of our Pittsburgh Silver Eagle family who have entered Greater Life, and we would remember them and give thanks for the gifts they shared with all of us over many decades: **Bonnie (Bonita) Hainings Davidson**, widow of Ron Davidson--who served as Rector of St. Christopher’s in Warrendale back in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s; **David Else**, who served for so many years in Recovery ministries; **Karen Geary**, who served as deacon at St. Peter’s in Butler; **Reuel Kaighn**, who served at Trinity, Beaver, and All Saints, Rosedale; and **Betsy Rodewald**, who served for so many years as deacon at Fox Chapel Episcopal/Christ Church Anglican and in first the Episcopal diocese and then the Anglican diocese as our most “Venerable” Archdeacon. We also have remembered in our prayers this year **Dolly Lee Simons**, mother of “Silver Eagle” Jim Simons, **Tim McNulty**, son of “Silver Eagle” Kitsy and the late Arthur McNulty, and **Nancy Norton**, our former long-time diocesan Director of Administration. May Light Perpetual shine upon them.

Again, I continue to be thankful for the opportunity to serve in this ministry.

Bruce Robison