

The Vintage Voice

Serving The Church Pension Fund's Family of Beneficiaries

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My Chaplain

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Some who read *The Vintage Voice* are fortunate to be in a diocese which has a Chaplain to the Retired. I am; are you? My chaplain is the Rev. Canon Robert S. Snell, who served as Chaplain to the Retired for the Diocese of Florida, even before the Church Pension Fund asked all dioceses to begin such a ministry. He approached the bishop with the idea, and it was accepted. Bob Snell and his wife, Leesie, plan diocesan events each year for retirees, and arrange for social events in the several regions of our diocese. The Snells' well organized, day-long funeral-planning workshop for retirees proved to be a gift for us and our families. Our bishop, the Rt. Rev. John Howard, has asked some of the retired clergy, spouses, and surviving spouses to serve as small group leaders at the diocesan convention and convocation.

Some dioceses have several Chaplains to the Retired. Some are men, some are women, and a few are lay persons. Their work in this ministry, sponsored by the Church Pension Fund (CPF), serves the large community of retirees. The chaplains themselves are retired and in some dioceses accept stipends to assist in their work as they "tend their flock" of retired clergy, spouses, and surviving spouses. Retirees are as diverse as the entire Church population, yet hold the common bond of maturity. Some in the flock are content to be left alone; others enjoy the pastoral care of their parish rector or hospital clergy. Many, however, not only receive attention, care, solace, and help from their chaplains, but are given the opportunity to meet new friends.

Tending the flock for the Diocese of Western North Carolina is the Rev. Harry Woggon, with his wife, Genelda. Harry tells about a situation that developed when a clergy widow moved into their diocese. First, he received her name from the Church Pension Fund, which is the way the system works. He contacted her and she accepted his invitation to become active in her local parish and involved at diocesan events. Had she not known the Woggons, this could never have happened, as she had been involved in another denomination with her children. She would not have known about the opportunities awaiting her.

The lay chaplain for the Diocese of San Diego, Lillian Jarrett, relates the story of a surviving spouse who asked about possible help for the cost of the care of her disabled daughter. The clergy couple had four children: three sons and a severely disabled daughter who had been in a residential care facility from the age of one. Her parents paid for her care from 1960 to 1971, at which time the mother became disabled and began receiving benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA). Beginning then, the daughter's care was paid by SSA.

The husband died in 1985, and his widow continued living in their home. By the time Jarrett was appointed Chaplain to the Retired for the diocese, the widow, suffering financial problems, was facing the need to sell her home. Chaplain Jarrett and the diocesan administrator contacted CPF and learned that the disabled daughter had been eligible for a benefit from the time of her father's death. The widow received a sizable retroactive check, and an ongoing monthly benefit until the daughter's death several years later. The widow continues to sing the praises of the Church Pension Fund. She is

a polio victim, but she carries on cheerfully attending church and the chaplain's meetings. Lillian Jarrett said, "I think it is important that the clergy and families know there is protection for disabled children of the retirees."

The Rev. Canon Larry G. Smellie serves the Diocese of Southwest Florida as one of three chaplains. His ministry led him to a retiree's family with whom he made the journey, as he describes it, from the priest's "initial collapse, through surgery, hospitalization, a short time at home, hospice care, death, funeral," after which Chaplain Smellie continued having regular contact with the cleric's widow. He was able to spend time with the widow and daughter, which is something not all parish clergy, nor bishops, are able to do. He drove many miles to take communion to the priest in the hospital, and continued visiting the priest when he went into hospice. The family was fortunate to have this ministry available to them, not only for their husband and father, but for themselves.

The stories about pastoral care in this ministry are many, but chaplains also plan happy social events and diocesan gatherings. Each chaplain has his or her own style of ministry. Some host regular conferences, some, a monthly luncheon, and several send birthday cards to retirees. Several chaplains tell about regularly scheduled luncheons for retirees with their bishop, and a few arrange a bishop's luncheon for surviving spouses only. One widow said, "I get a chance to talk with our bishop, and it's not at church or a funeral."

Each year, the chaplains gather at a conference hosted by the Church Pension Fund's Pastoral Care Office. The Pastoral Care staff produced a handbook for all Chaplains to the Retired, *Caring for Our Treasures*, written by a group of their constituency scattered geographically around the U.S. Copies were sent to all diocesan bishops.

Asked to reflect on this ministry, a chaplain for the Diocese of Rochester, the Rev. Richard J. Eckart, said, "I found myself empowered by these people whose ministry had taken on imagination and depth, accurately reflecting God's love for us. I hope that others find that same element of fire among their brothers and sisters in Christ, so that they might be caught up by the power of the Gospel."

The following dioceses have Chaplains to the Retired. If you are planning a move to any of these dioceses, contact the diocesan office and get the name of their chaplain, or chaplains: Alabama, Alaska, Albany, Arizona, Arkansas, Atlanta, Bethlehem, California, Central Florida, Central Gulf Coast, Central New York, Central Pennsylvania, Chicago, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, East Tennessee, Eastern Michigan, Easton, Eau Claire, Florida, Fort Worth, Georgia, Hawaii, Indianapolis, Kansas, Kentucky, Lexington, Long Island, Los Angeles, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Newark, North Carolina, North Dakota, Northern California, Northern Indiana, Northern Michigan, Northwest Texas, Ohio, Oklahoma, Olympia, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Quincy, Rhode Island, Rio Grande, Rochester, San Diego, South Carolina, Southeast Florida, Southern Ohio, Southern Virginia, Southwest Florida, Southwestern Virginia, Tennessee, Texas, Upper South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Missouri, West Tennessee, West Texas, West Virginia, Western Massachusetts, Western New York, Western North Carolina.



Judy Mathews lives in Tallahassee, Florida, reads on the radio for the blind and does volunteer work for her parish, Holy Comforter. She has two grown children and three grandchildren. Judy is the widow of the Rev. Lex S. Mathews, who died in 1985.