

Retirement Benefits & Savings Options for Clergy

For U.S. citizens and U.S. resident aliens who have service both in and outside of the U.S.

Many clergy in the U.S. have served the Anglican Communion both in and outside of the U.S. These clergy may have been ordained and served most of their careers outside of the U.S., but now serve within the U.S. for The Episcopal Church (TEC) or a church that has an ecumenical or concordat relationship with TEC. The following guidelines are offered to identify some opportunities for retirement benefits and other savings options offered to clergy who work for TEC in the U.S.

Clergy Pension Plan

With limited exceptions, **all ordained clergy with canonical residency in a diocese of TEC are required to participate in a pension plan maintained by The Church Pension Fund (CPF)**. Clergy who are canonically resident in a domestic diocese of TEC participate in The Church Pension Fund Clergy Pension Plan (the Clergy Plan). (Clergy who are canonically resident in a non-domestic diocese of TEC participate in the International Clergy Pension Plan.) Clergy will receive a benefit from the Clergy Plan so long as assessments are paid on their behalf as described below.

- You must earn 5 years of “credited service” to become “vested” in your benefit under the Clergy Plan. You earn credited service for all the time you work for TEC and assessments to CPF are paid on your behalf. Being vested means that you can never lose your benefit, even if you stop working for TEC.
- You may personally pay assessments and receive credited service for employment in TEC up to 12 months prior to your reception into TEC. Assessments are based on the compensation earned during that period and are paid following reception. Clergy may also personally pay assessments to supplement part-time assessments that are paid by your employer. This credited service applies to both vesting and benefits.
- Once you are a participant in the Clergy Plan, you may personally pay assessments for ministry with a non-TEC organization, or your non-TEC employer may pay the assessments for you, and you will receive credited service for that period. Your bishop must have approved this work as an extension of your ministry on the form available on CPG’s website, and CPF must approve the application. To download the form, go to cpg.org/extensionofministry.
- When you retire, if at least 80% of your credited service in the Clergy Plan was earned while you were canonically resident in a domestic diocese of TEC or Puerto Rico, you may be eligible for a minimum benefit under the Clergy Plan. (The International Clergy Pension Plan also has a minimum benefit if you are not eligible for the minimum benefit under the Clergy Plan.)

Those who are not eligible to participate in the Clergy Plan may want to explore the following options with their TEC employer:

Retirement Savings Plan (RSVP)

Church employees, including clergy, have the opportunity to enhance their retirement security by electing to personally contribute to The Episcopal Church Retirement Savings Plan (RSVP), a 403(b) plan. **Your TEC employer may also elect to make contributions to RSVP on your behalf.** To be eligible you must:

- ~ Be employed by a TEC employer that has enrolled its employees for participation in the RSVP. (If you work for a secular employer, you may enroll in the RSVP only if your employment with that employer is part of your TEC ministry and is determined by a diocesan bishop to be an “extension of ministry” in accordance with Canon III. 9.3(e).*)
- ~ Meet the eligibility requirements set by your employer
- ~ Have either a valid Social Security number or tax identification number
- Once you are eligible to participate in the RSVP, you may roll a distribution you receive from another employer’s 403(b) or 401(k) plan into the RSVP, even if you elect not to make new contributions to the RSVP. You may also roll over amounts you have saved in an IRA. (Note, however, that eligible amounts rolled over into the RSVP from a secular employer are not eligible for the housing allowance exclusion when they are distributed to you.)

* Episcopal bishops and diocesan administrators seeking clarification of CPF rules and regulations regarding special circumstances surrounding the designation of an “extension of ministry” are welcome to contact CPF.

Individual Retirement Annuities or Accounts

Clergy may establish an Individual Retirement Annuity or Account (IRA) to personally add to their retirement savings.

- IRAs may be available in your state from the Church Life Insurance Corporation. Many other financial institutions also offer IRAs.

We welcome the opportunity to serve you.

For general information about any of these retirement benefits or savings opportunities, please contact Client Services at (866) 802-6333. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact Education & Wellness for financial planning guidance and Client Services for RSVP enrollment and pension plan administration assistance (y para servicio en español) directly at:

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