

MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT

P-100.01

ORDINATION PROCESS FOR MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT AND COMMISSIONED LAY PASTORS (October 2017)

I. PROCESS FOR ORDINATION

- A. The Continuing Preparation for Ministry Task Group (CPMT) will create a step-by-step process for ordination in our Presbytery as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament or as a Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP). Persons who are interested will consult the Presbytery of the Northern Plains' Handbook for Inquirers, Candidates and CLPs.
- B. The Care for Congregations Pod shall carry out the following for CLPs:
 1. Oversee the process by which a congregation seeking a ruling elder commissioned as pastor gets matched with a suitable candidate.
 2. Work with the parties in developing a written local commission.
- C. The Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod shall carry out the following for CLPs.
 1. Arrange for the commissioning service.
 2. Oversee the annual review

II. THE COMMISSIONING OF CLPs

- A. Administration of the CLP Program
 1. The Care for Congregations Pod shall be notified when a learner has completed the examination and been placed by the Care for Congregations Pod on the Trained Lay Pastor (TLP) list.
 2. The Care for Congregations Pod shall work with the TLP and any session or ministry desiring to contract for his or her services in developing a local commission
 3. Once the Care for Congregations Pod approves the local commission, the learner shall be presented to presbytery for commissioning. This will take place at a meeting of the presbytery but a service of recognition will be planned for the local site.
- B. Annual Review

An annual review of the work of the Commissioned Lay Pastor shall be conducted by the employing body and reported to the Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod. Attention will be given to the way in which the Commissioned Lay Pastor has made use of continuing education opportunities.
- C. Commissioning of CLPs
 1. A Trained Lay Pastor shall not be commissioned to serve as the pastor of a congregation in which they are a member.
 2. The Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod can grant a commission to a TLP, when a church, the presbytery or another approved institution (such as a hospital, nursing home, prison, or police department), or regional commission, extends an invitation to serve a local commission to a Trained Lay Pastor. The Pod will report the new commission to the Presbytery at the next called meeting.
 3. In considering this recommendation, the presbytery shall receive from the candidate being considered for a first commission a statement of personal faith and a description of her or his sense of call to this ministry. Presbyters may ask the candidate questions based on these statements.
 4. If the brief examination by Presbytery is sustained and the motion passes to commission the candidate for the specified ministry, the Moderator of Presbytery will ask the candidate the constitutional questions in accord with W-4.4003. Following affirmative answers, a brief charge

shall be given, followed by a prayer from the Moderator.

5. When a Trained Lay Pastor who has been previously commissioned is offered a new commission, Care for Congregations Pod shall review the proposed local commission and, if it accords with the guidelines in this policy, may approve the new relationship and subsequently report its decision to the presbytery.
6. The Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod and Care for Congregations Pod will work with the congregation or other institution extending the commission to assure that a service of recognition is held to mark the new relationship and to seek the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

D. Expectations regarding the local commission

1. The Presbytery of the Northern Plains shall approve no commissions without a written local commission.
2. The terms in the local commission will meet the guidelines in Presbytery's policies regarding minimum compensation.
3. The terms of the local commission will annually:
 - i. Be spread upon the minutes of the session, or other institution, which is extending the commission;
 - ii. Be sent to the Care for Congregations Pod for review and filing.
4. If there is difficulty in determining the terms of the local commission, either party may request the assistance from either the Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod and/or Care for Congregations Pod.

E. Opportunities for Learners and Trained Lay Pastors

1. Lay Pastor Learners in this program may, under the guidance of their Mentors, be allowed to preach occasionally when invited by sessions to do so.
2. Trained Lay Pastors (TLPs) will be listed on the Presbytery's Pulpit Supply List and authorized to preach whenever so invited.

F. Expectations regarding annual Review of Commissioned Lay Pastors

1. As required by the *Book of Order* (G-2.1001) an annual review shall be conducted of the work of Commissioned Lay Pastors.
2. The review will be conducted by the session or other commissioning body making use of forms provided for this purpose by the Care for Congregations Pod.
3. A written report of the review will be submitted annually to the Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod. This report shall consist of a mentor, session and self-evaluation of the CLP.
4. Failure to comply will be reported at the next presbytery meeting for presbytery consideration and inclusion in the minutes. Failure to comply with the above expectation may result in the revocation of the CRE's commission.

G. Renewal or Termination of the local commission

1. The Presbytery may renew a local commission when it expires if all the parties agree that it is in the best interest of all that the commission continue.
2. Renewal of a local commission will be marked by a letter from Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod to session confirming renewal.
3. The Care for Congregations Pod may revoke the commission of any Commissioned Lay Pastor who does not abide by the provisions contained in the *Book of Order* or in this policy. Care for Congregations Pod will then report its action to the Presbytery at the next called meeting.

P-100.02**ORDINATION/INSTALLATION (April 1990, Revised October 2017)****THE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

The order of worship is to be planned by the person to be ordained or installed with aid given by the Installations/Ordinations Task Leader. It shall then be submitted in working form (not the printed bulletin) to the presiding officer of the commission for approval no less than two weeks before the service is to be held. The presiding officer will make any necessary additions or corrections before the bulletins are printed.

The order of worship shall be consistent with The Directory for Worship (W-4.4003). The following elements must be included in the service:

Call to Worship; Opening Statement by the Presiding Officer; Scripture Reading; Sermon Appropriate to the Occasion; The Questions as given in G I4.0405 and 14.0510 (2005 Edition); The Laying on of Hands with Prayer (ordination service); Prayer of Installation (installation service); Statement of Ordination or Installation by the Presiding Officer; A Welcome by Members of Presbytery and others; A Benediction by the Person Being Ordained and Installed.

Other elements may be added to the service as appropriate such as hymns by the congregation, by a choir, prayers, a charge to the minister of the Word and Sacrament and/or the congregation, and a brief statement by the person being ordained or installed before the benediction is given. Taking an offering for the purpose of funding seminary scholarships is encouraged.

A helpful order of worship, prayers and scripture readings suitable for ordination or installation may be found in The Worship Book, "A Service of Ordination and Installation." Helpful prayers may be found in The Book of Common Worship. Questions from The Form of Government must be used.

Particular care must be taken to assure that language used throughout the service is inclusive.

THE OFFERING

Funds received during the offering would be maintained in an account under the control and disbursed at the discretion of the Leadership Pod in consultation with the Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod.

THE COMMISSION

The Commission will consist of at least five members, one of whom shall be the Moderator of the Presbytery or his/her designee, who will act as the presiding officer. Presbytery will reimburse travel expenses for these five commissioners. Please try to select commissioners close to the worship site. The candidate or congregation may invite others to serve on the commission or to participate in the service. Their expenses will be the responsibility of the inviting party.

P-100.03**MEMBERSHIP ADMISSION AND DISSOLUTION
(October 2017)****I. PASTOR CONTEMPLATES RESIGNATION OR RETIREMENT**

- A. Leader of the Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod is to be informed, especially as the contemplated resignation becomes imminent. Pod Leader may designate a representative to be in communication with the pastor.
- B. The pastor may also wish to consult with colleagues and trusted lay people.

C. Pastor and Leader of the Care for Pastor Leaders Pod (or representative) discuss:

1. Reasons for this intended resignation
2. Approximate resignation time frame
3. Steps involved in resignation procedure
4. Issues related to continuity of pastoral care for the congregation.

II. PASTOR MAKES DECISION TO RESIGN

- A. Inform Leader of the Care for Pastor Leaders Pod immediately; "EXIT CHECK SHEET" is mailed to the pastor, if not already done. Leader of the Care for Pastor Leaders Pod will notify Leader of the Care of Congregations of resignation.
- B. Determine if it will be possible to follow the preferable procedure to have a Care for Pastor Leaders Pod representative present at the Session meeting when the pastor presents resignation request.
- C. Discuss with Care for Pastor Leaders Pod representative the proposed date for the congregational dissolution meeting.
- D. Arrange with the Presbytery Moderator for a substitute moderator for the congregational meeting (See G-2.0903).

III. ROLES OF THE SESSION

- A. Concur with the request of the pastor to set the date and the time for the congregational meeting and the effective date for the resignation.
- B. Determine that all financial obligations to pastor will be fulfilled.
- C. Be informed of Presbytery's supportive role which will be carried out through the Care for Congregations Pod:
 1. Another Minister of the Word and Sacrament from the Presbytery may be present, if needed, to serve as moderator of the congregational meeting.
 2. Presbytery will take final action on pastor's request.
 3. Presbytery will provide a moderator for the Session.
 4. Presbytery will provide guidance in establishing a Pastor Nominating Committee and work with that Committee.
 5. Presbytery will recommend provision for pastoral leadership and care.
- D. Only if Care for Congregations Pod gives permission - recommend to the special meeting of the Congregation a method for electing the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC):
 1. Determine how many persons shall constitute the PNC.
 2. Discuss concerns necessary in assuring a representative committee is elected.
 3. Decide how the PNC will be nominated.
 4. Make it known that the pastor shall in no way be involved in the influencing the nominating process for the PNC.
 5. Make it clear that the PNC can be elected only after an irrevocable resignation date has been set and approved by the Presbytery.

IV. EXIT CHECK SHEET FOR PASTORS

A. TWO DISSOLUTION VARIATIONS

1. Retirement by Pastors
 - a. Notify Leader of the Care for Pastors Leadership Pod of retirement decision and effective date and arrange a time at a meeting of Presbytery to recognize the faithful service of the retiring minister of the Word and Sacrament.
 - b. Ask Session to call a congregational meeting to act on resignation request.
 - c. Advise Session, only with Care for Congregations Pod approval, to recommend to congregation a procedure for nominating the PNC.
 - d. Elect a PNC at the congregational meeting ONLY under two conditions: 1) Presbytery has

set an irrevocable date when the Pulpit will be declared vacant; and 2) the proposed election is included in the Call.

2. Resignation by Pastor to accept a Call, or for other reasons.
 - a. Notify Leader of the Care for Pastors Leadership Pod of intent to resign.
 - b. Request Session to call a congregational meeting and recommend effective resignation date.
 - c. Notify Leader of the Care for Pastors Leadership Pod when definite resignation date has been set.

B. ADDITIONAL STEPS FOR ALL DISSOLUTION PROCEDURES

1. Request Session to call special meeting of congregation.
2. Inform Session of steps for terminating pastoral relationship that have been worked out with Leader of the Care for Pastors Leadership Pod.
 - a. Arrange for meeting of Session and Care for Pastors Leadership Pod Representative.
 - b. Have Session arrange for nominations for PNC.
 - c. Elect two elders to attest to action taken by the congregation. This will be done by attendance at a Presbytery Meeting or a letter to the Leader of the Care for Pastors Leadership Pod.
 - d. Pastor should also be prepared to speak at a Presbytery Meeting or to the Care for Pastors Leadership Pod regarding the dissolution.
 - e. Immediately following congregational meeting pastor will send a completed copy of dissolution request to Leader of the Care for Pastors Leadership Pod.
 - f. Assemble statistics helpful to Pastoral Nominating Committee in completing the Ministry Information Form.
 - (1) Membership today and five years ago.
 - (2) Annual giving today and five years ago.
 - (3) Current debt of church and annual payments.
 - (4) Average attendance at worship services and church school.
 - (5) List of major organizations of the church.
 - (6) List of curriculum for Christian Education programs.
3. Request Presbytery Moderator to appoint a moderator for congregational meeting, if circumstances make it impractical for the pastor to moderate.
4. Attend congregational meeting and present formal resignation.
 - a. Fulfill all your responsibilities promptly:
 - (1) Clear out all personal books and belongings from study.
 - (2) Clean Manse after movers have gone.
 - (3) Pay all bills.
 - (4) Arrange for transfer of any debts.
 - (5) Notify Board of Pensions.
5. Have pulpit supply committee appointed by the Session.
 - a. Make a clear and final break with the congregation so far as pastoral duties and services are concerned. You will have close friends you will keep in touch with, but refrain from any pastoral functions unless you are invited by the Session.

P-100.04

PROCESS FOR EXAMINATION OF MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT SEEKING MEMBERSHIP IN THE PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS (April 1984, Revised October 2017)

“The Presbytery, shall examine each minister of the Word and Sacrament or candidate who seeks membership in it on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church.”

(G-3.0306)

I. ACTIVE MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT FROM OTHER PRESBYTERIES SEEKING MEMBERSHIP

A. Initial Contact

1. Membership Admissions and Departures Task Leader and a representative will interview each minister of the Word and Sacrament at the earliest possible time prior to that person being invited to be a candidate for a minister of the Word and Sacrament position in this Presbytery.

B. The purpose of the contact is:

1. To provide each candidate with information about this Presbytery,
2. To inquire if the candidate has questions about the congregation or community that may be served,
3. To inform the candidate that the Care for Pastoral Leader Pod is required to make a value judgment on the candidacy of every minister of the Word and Sacrament seeking membership in this Presbytery, and
4. To alert the candidate to the required examination interview and explain the procedures.

C. Examination Interview

1. After a minister of the Word and Sacrament has been invited to become a candidate, the Membership Admissions and Departures Task Leader and a representative, ordinarily a ruling elder and a minister of the Word and Sacrament, will meet with that candidate:
 - a. To review the written responses (see #2 below),
 - b. To discuss any items of mutual concern, and
 - c. To make a recommendation to the Care of Pastoral Leaders Pod regarding this person's membership in this Presbytery.
2. Each candidate may submit a written response of no more than one page in length to each of the examination areas stated in the Form of Government (G-3.0306):
 - a. "Christian Faith" Summarize your faith pilgrimage and identify the "growing edge" of your faith at this time.
 - b. "Views in Theology" State your understanding of the theological views set forth in the first three Constitutional Questions (a, b, c) addressed to elders, deacons, and teaching elder at the time of their ordination or installation (W-4.4000).
 - c. "The Sacraments" How important are the Sacraments in the life of the Church, as you understand them, and why?
 - d. "The Government of the Church" Read through the entire Book of Order and note a minimum of three items that you wish to discuss with the Membership Admissions and Departures Task Leader and representative. Identify these as items of your strong endorsement, concern, confusion, or reluctance compliance.

II. MEMBER-AT-LARGE MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT FROM OTHER PRESBYTERIES

These ministers of the Word and Sacrament will be examined according to the procedure for active ministers of the Word and Sacrament as set forth under #I-B above, including why do they seek membership in this Presbytery?

III. MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS WHO SEEK MEMBERSHIP

- A. Examination of from other denominations will follow the same procedure as examination of active members from other presbyteries.
- B. In addition, the Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod may requests written responses to the following questions:
 1. Why do you seek membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?
 2. Why are you leaving your present denomination?
- C. These persons are to be informed that as part of their examination they must be prepared to answer questions posed by members of the Presbytery at the same time they are being presented for membership. Such questions will normally be confined to the area of the minister of the Word and Sacrament's belief.

IV. POLICY ON INTEGRATION OF NON-PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT INTO OUR MEMBERSHIP (April 1996)

All non-Presbyterian ministers of the Word and Sacrament/clergy appointed to serve congregations of this Presbytery shall be required, prior to being admitted to membership to complete study of Presbyterian polity and reformed theology under the direction of the Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod and in accordance with a process to be developed by the pod and approved by Presbytery. Successful completion of the study shall be determined by the results of a review conducted under the supervision of the Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod by the Ecumenical Relations Task Leader.

Following the successful completion of the review, such ministers of the Word and Sacrament may be admitted to temporary membership in Presbytery under the provisions of G-2.0506, upon recommendation by the Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod.

Such ministers of the Word and Sacrament/clergy shall be offered the option of installation to service (if appropriate) following admission to membership in Presbytery.

Such ministers of the Word and Sacrament/clergy may be named as moderators of sessions only after successful completion of the review of polity and admission to Presbytery membership.

V. HONORABLY RETIRED AND INACTIVE MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT FROM OTHER PRESBYTERIES

Examination of Honorably Retired ministers of the Word and Sacrament and inactive ministers of the Word and Sacrament who seek membership in this Presbytery will be considered by the Care of Pastoral Leadership Pod on an individual basis at the time of application.

P-100.05

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR CHURCH PROFESSIONALS (April 1990)

I. REQUIREMENTS

In light of the historical importance placed on formal education and training of the teaching elder leadership in the Presbyterian tradition and the importance to have this training and education continuously updated, the Presbytery of the Northern Plains requires:

- A. When a call is extended to a teaching elder, and all others whose terms of employment are approved by Presbytery, it shall include as a term of the call, two weeks each year for continuing education. During this time the employed person is relieved of all duties but the time is not considered to be part of his/her vacation.

- B. That all present employing agencies of the churches or of the Presbytery are encouraged to change the call to their present teaching elder(s) or church professional(s) whose terms of employment are approved by Presbytery to include two weeks per year for continuing education.
- C. That the church, parish, or employing agency budget a minimum of \$500 each year to apply toward continuing education expenses of their teaching elder(s) and church professional(s).
- D. That the two weeks of annual study leave be cumulative for a maximum of six weeks.
- E. That the annual study leave grant be cumulative to a maximum of the total amount of three years.
- F. That all Minister of the Word and Sacrament and church professionals confer with their appropriate board before enrolling in a continuing education program or event.
- G. That there shall be an annual accounting to the employing agency of the utilization of continuing education time and monies with reported balances of accrued time and monies each year. This data shall be included in the annual report on teaching elder compensation and changes in terms of call.
- H. That continuing education be a concern in the triennial visits with sessions and annual visit to parish and non-parish ministers of the Presbytery.
- I. That a Minister of the Word and Sacrament or other church professional whose terms of employment are approved by Presbytery forfeits his/her accumulation of time and allowance for continuing education if it has not been used prior to the dissolution of the Minister of the Word and Sacrament relationship.
- J. That employing agencies be encouraged to provide that unused continuing education monies at the end of the three-year cumulative term and continuing education monies forfeited at the end of the dissolution of the employment relationship shall be placed in a Presbytery Fund which shall be designated for continuing education events and/or scholarship aid to those serving in Presbytery approved positions.

II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Presbytery of the Northern Plains recognizes that educational needs vary with individuals and that those needs correlate with both experience and the situations of employment. The Presbytery further recognizes that continuing education opportunities encompass a broad range of events and programs, some involving portions of a day and others requiring several years. The nature of the program and the duration obviously has direct bearing on associated costs. While considerable effort is made to provide close access of continuing education programs particular needs often require substantial travel costs. Special circumstances sometimes require inclusion of a spouse or members of a family. Careful consideration is encouraged of all persons utilizing continuing education time and monies and all employing agencies that provide the funds.

P-100.06

SEPARATION ETHICS: WHEN PASTOR AND CONGREGATION SAY GOODBYE

Background and guidelines for pastors, sessions, and congregations concerning relationships and responsibilities upon the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. Based upon a document approved by the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area on October 12, 1993. Book of Order references are to the 2011-2013 Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. THE BACKGROUND TO THESE GUIDELINES	P-100
A. Introductory Comments	P-100
B. Some Biblical Assumptions	P-100
II. THE GUIDELINES	P-101
A. Saying Goodbye	P-101

1. Saying Goodbye to Accept a Call a Distance Away P-101
 2. Saying Goodbye But Remaining a Neighbor P-101
 3. When One is Elected Pastor Emeritus P-102
 4. When a Pastor's Family Stays Behind
- B. Responsibilities in Saying Goodbye P-102
1. Responsibilities of the Departing Pastor P-103
 2. Responsibilities of the Session P-105
 3. Responsibilities of the Committee on Ministry P-105

III. BIBLIOGRAPHY P-16

IV. RELEVANT BOOK OF ORDER REFERENCES P-16

I. THE BACKGROUND TO THESE GUIDELINES

A. Introductory Comments

The pastoral relationship is very important, often deeply personal, and, in some cases, lifesaving to people in a congregation. This relationship evolves through study, teaching, preaching, administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, weddings, funerals, presence in crises, and praying with and for members of the congregation. With the leadership of a congregation and particularly with the elders, the pastor works to encourage the people in the worship and service of God, equipping them for their tasks within the church and their mission in the world. In all of these dimensions of the pastoral relationship there are the elements of trust, confidence, admiration, affection, fondness, caring, and love.

The ending of the pastoral relationship is often a trying and traumatic experience for both the pastor and the members of a congregation. It always means change for the life of the pastor involved and the congregation. Therefore, in the light of our Book of Order and the best of our traditions, the following guidelines represent what the departing pastor and the congregation will want to do as they face the situation of pastor and congregation saying "Goodbye."

B. Some Biblical Assumptions

Any church "policy" concerning the separation of a Pastor and Congregation must be informed and illumined by insights gained from such fields as organization and human resource management, the behavior of groups and congregations, and the dynamics of change. Such a policy also must arise from, and be under girded by, the truth of Scripture, as the church humbly submits to the authority of God's Word in all its actions. This policy on "Separation Ethics" represents an effort to derive specific codes of action from the overall teachings of the Bible, and specifically from the books of 1 and 2 Timothy.

1. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service" (I Tim. 1:12). God calls leaders for the church, and appoints and equips them for service. In our sin and pride, we may neglect to hold onto this promise, replacing trust in God to provide for the church with employment models and vocabularies drawn from the culture. At times, however, and especially during periods of transition, all involved must strive to discern the will of God.
2. "We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe." (I Tim. 4:10). God alone is worthy of the church's hope! However thankful we may be to God for providing faithful and gifted ministers, ministers and congregants alike must not ascribe to mere humans the glory and honor worthy of God alone. We must be quick to let go. We cling only to Christ.
3. "Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." (I Tim. 4:12). Although all involved in a pastoral transition (minister, session, congregation, and presbytery)

have particular roles and responsibilities, yet the minister is accountable in a special way to set an example of mature faithfulness in all matters pertaining to the change in ministry. He/she is a model and mentor for others throughout the process, and is expected to live-up to this high calling, even if others do not.

4. “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.” (I Tim. 4:13). During periods of transition in church leadership (“Until I come . . .”) a great many organizational tasks must be completed and corporate issues managed. However, such tasks and issues must not be permitted to take on greater importance than the central calling to which the church is called, which is to proclaim the Word of God.
5. “Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly” (2 Tim. 2:16). God’s Word teaches that one of the greatest threats to the health and strength of the church is undisciplined speech. Idle chatter, gossip and criticism are causes and manifestations of ungodliness, and are especially dangerous during periods of transition. Great care must be taken to assure that speech be faithful, truthful, loving, encouraging and kind.”

II. THE GUIDELINES

A. Saying Goodbye

The need to say goodbye to a congregation occurs for one of several reasons. A pastor may receive a call to another field of service. A pastor may decide to retire. A pastor may decide to leave the pastoral ministry and enter another area of service. The presbytery may, for cause, take the initiative to dissolve the relationship. This break can be a difficult time for both the pastor and the congregation. Whatever the cause, it becomes the occasion when pastor and congregation find they must say goodbye.

1. **Saying Goodbye to Accept a Call a Distance Away**

When a pastor accepts a call to a ministry a distance from the congregation which she or he is leaving, the opportunity for contact with members of the former congregation is quite limited, often non-existent. However, there frequently arise certain circumstances which pose questions for the departing pastor as to what is appropriate and what can be most helpful to the congregation and the interim and following pastors. It is always incumbent upon the departing pastor to make sure that parishioners know that her or his pastoral relationship with the congregation *will come to an end*. It is important that parishioners understand that this change of relationship is necessary in order that the congregation be free, in all respects, to welcome the future God has planned (see Section 2, "Responsibilities in Saying Goodbye," below).

2. **Saying Goodbye but Remaining a Neighbor**

When a pastor says goodbye and remains nearby, there are particularly sensitive aspects of separation which require careful attention on the part of the departing pastor. The experience of pastors and congregations over the years has led many to believe that when a pastor ends a ministry with a congregation, it is best for the pastor to move out of the community. However, this is not always possible or advisable. Thus, it is particularly important when a departing pastor remains in the community and in proximity to the former congregation, that he or she, with care and forethought, pay particular attention to what is said below with reference to a departing pastor's responsibilities to the congregation, individual members of the congregation, and to the interim and subsequently installed pastors (see Section B, below).

The departing pastor should neither participate in the life of a ministry setting which he/she left or from which she/he retired, nor provide pastoral services for a congregation which he/she left or from which she/he retired, except as directed by presbytery (*Standards* 3-4.). The departing pastor will not start, or participate in, new worship opportunities within the community where they have served. A retiring pastor who remains in the proximity of the congregation, from which he or she has retired, will need to give careful consideration to the

responsibilities that follow below in Section B.

3. **When One is Elected Pastor Emeritus**

When a pastor retires, the congregation may bestow upon him or her the title of **Pastor Emeritus**. The provision for this is found in the *Book of Order* as follows: “When any pastor or associate pastor retires, and the congregation is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary relationship, it may, at a regularly called congregational meeting, elect him or her as pastor emeritus or emerita, with or without honorarium, but *with no pastoral authority or duty*. This action shall be taken *only after consultation with the committee on ministry of the presbytery concerning the wisdom of this relationship for the peace of the church*. This action shall be subject to the approval of presbytery, and may take effect upon the formal dissolution of the pastoral or associate pastoral relationship or anytime thereafter. (*Book of Order*, G-14.0605. Emphasis added.)

To elect one as pastor or associate pastor emeritus:

- is evidence of a long and loving, mutually caring pastoral relationship;
- is a congregation's way of saying to the church-at-large and to the world that they love this person and are thankful for his or her time with them; and
- is a gift to the retired pastor which says something special to him or her.

However, the *pastoral* relationship has been dissolved. The relationship of *pastor* to people has ended and there is no expectation of the person to be present with the congregation because of the election.

All expectations related to the former pastor of a congregation apply to a pastor emeritus (see Section B, below).

4. **When a Pastor's Family Stays Behind**

Work, school, health, or other lifestyle considerations can result in situations where member(s) of the pastor's immediate family do not leave the community for some period of time after dissolution. While it may be in the best interest of the pastor's family that they be able to continue to worship in the church, it may not be in the best interest of the church, as the church will be entering into a time of searching and retrospection regarding the former pastor's call. This can be an emotional time for a church and having family still participating in the life of the church, can make it difficult for the church to move on.

Thus, allowing a Pastor's family to continue to participate in the life of the church should be carefully considered by the Chair of the committee on ministry. The following is potential course of action:

- The preferred choice is that when a Pastor leaves the church, the spouse and minor children should leave as well.

B. Responsibilities in Saying Goodbye

This paper speaks of "Separation Ethics." The use of the term "ethics" implies certain values which are important to consider during this often highly charged experience of the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. Such values include:

- effective leadership;
- congregational health and stability;
- the growth of pastor and members in dealing with the pain, the problems, and the possibilities of separation; and

- the ability of the session and congregation to move positively and effectively toward the next phase of their life together.

These values instruct the conduct and responsibilities of both the pastor and the congregation regarding their separation.

The material which follows is addressed to pastor, session, and congregation as appropriate, and finally, the committee on ministry of the presbytery. However, the pastor is the one in the professional leadership role and, therefore, the one who has the responsibility, along with a spouse or significant other, for making sure that the separation that occurs is anticipated and carried through with effectiveness.

1. **Responsibilities of the Departing Pastor**

Because of the sensitivity of the pastoral relationship, it is important that the departing pastor, in **any** dissolution, assume certain responsibilities to the former congregation, to the remaining staff and personnel of the church, to individual members of that congregation, and to the interim and next installed pastors.

a. **To the Congregation**

When the date has been set for the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the departing pastor must take the lead in beginning to prepare the congregation for their separation. Certain things will need to be communicated clearly to the congregation in order to avoid confusion on the part of members in the days ahead.

This communication can be accomplished in several ways. A letter could be addressed to the members of the congregation spelling out clearly the matters below which are part of the separation and the time that follows. A sermon might contain references to the approaching separation and speak to these matters. In casual conversation one-on-one or in groups, in public presence, in newsletters, in all contacts with people of the congregation, it is important that these matters be communicated and every effort made to have them understood. These matters are:

- (1) that all pastoral and professional relationships and responsibilities of the pastor with the congregation will end as of the effective date of the dissolution;
- (2) that the pastor will not be involved in any way in the selection process of either the interim pastor or the next installed pastor. Neither will he or she be involved in any way with the selection of any search team or pastor nominating committee or in discussion and deliberation concerning the future ministry of the church.
- (3) that the pastor, after leaving, will not become engaged in conversations with church members or staff which, in any way, offer opinions or criticism about the life of the congregation or the performance of the interim or any subsequent installed pastors;
- (4) that any desire on the part of members of the congregation for the departing pastor to participate in congregational life or services should be discussed not with the departing pastor, but with the interim pastor or subsequent installed pastor;
- (5) that the departing pastor may participate in a wedding, a funeral, or a baptism of the congregation, after the date of dissolution, only under the direction of presbytery and with the invitation of the interim pastor or installed pastor, who shall be the officiant.

b. **To Individual Members of the Congregation**

It is important that, with particular friends, it be made clear that the pastoral relationship will come to an end. This does not mean that friendships must come to an end. Friendships are priceless and are to be preserved, but there is a special responsibility on the part of the departing pastor to prevent friendships from becoming confused with the pastoral relationship. The pastoral functions of counseling, calling, conducting weddings, funerals,

or baptisms and planning, hosting and attending worship or prayer gatherings or Bible study with or for members of the former congregation are not appropriate. Neither is the rendering of opinions or judgments about the ministry of the former church or its pastor. It is the departing pastor's responsibility to see that this *really* happens. Particular attention should be paid to ways that social media use might encumber a healthy dissociation.

If the former pastor receives a request to return to the congregation for a particular occasion, it is important for her or him to remind those making the request that the present pastor is the one to whom the request should be made.

In any social context, where the former pastor is with friends or other members of the former congregation, it is the responsibility of the former pastor to be sure that he or she voices no criticism or evaluative comments about the new leadership of the congregation. It is not appropriate for the former pastor to comment on the "state of the congregation" or to be involved in any way in the selection of a successor, once she or he has departed.

c. **To the Remaining Staff and Personnel of the Church**

The former pastor has a responsibility to the remaining staff and personnel of the church at least in the following ways: 1) to prepare them for the separation that will occur; 2) to encourage them to receive and welcome the interim pastor and next installed pastor and be prepared to alter working patterns and relationships as may be needed; and, 3) to make clear that he or she will not be available for counsel or advice regarding the life and work of the church.

d. **To the Interim and Subsequent Installed Pastors**

The former pastor has a responsibility to the interim pastor and to subsequent installed pastors to make sure that any requests that come to him or her for services in the former congregation be redirected by the requesters to the interim pastor or installed pastor. It is important that, when any request comes to the former pastor, she or he be in touch with the current pastor to let it be known what contacts have been made with him or her. This is a courtesy which is important to be extended to the current pastor. There should be no pastoral functions of any kind performed by the former pastor without the prior invitation or request of the current pastor.

Should any community non-church function call the former pastor back into the community for public appearance of whatever nature, as a courtesy, the former pastor should inform the current pastor of the fact and the nature of the occasion.

2. **Responsibilities of the Session**

a. **To the Departing Pastor**

Following the pastor's decision to request dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the session can give support and encouragement to the pastor in the implementation of the decision. This can be done by assisting the pastor in interpreting the meaning of the end of the pastoral relationship to the congregation and, if need be, to the wider community.

As a caring expression of closure, it is appropriate for the session to arrange for an occasion when the congregation and pastor may formally say goodbye.

b. **To the Congregation**

The session will want to be sensitive to the feeling of loss experienced by members of the congregation while demonstrating through their actions the meaning of the end of the pastoral relationship.

Additional session leadership may be needed in the transition period so that worship, congregational life, and fellowship may continue.

The session can help the members of the congregation by encouraging them to see this time as an opportunity for growth and change. It can be a time for listening to individuals and groups in the congregation. It can be a time for examining present life, ministry, and service, and to be open to new possibilities. It is important that the congregation be prepared for change and for new pastoral leadership.

The session should explain to the congregation the role of the presbytery during this transitional period. This role includes the naming of a session moderator and through its committee on ministry providing guidance during the subsequent processes of obtaining an interim minister and calling an installed pastor.

3. Responsibilities of the Committee on Ministry

a. To the Departing Pastor

Upon learning of the pastor's intention to retire or resign, a representative of the committee on ministry shall meet with the pastor to discuss these guidelines.

b. To the Session and Congregation

Committee on ministry representative(s) are available to be present at the meeting of the session when the pastor announces his or her resignation. The meeting shall include informing the session fully of these guidelines and orienting the session to the process of seeking pastoral leadership following the departure of the present pastor.

A representative of the committee on ministry shall be present at the meeting of the congregation when the pastor requests concurrence in her or his plans to leave, to inform the congregation of the process for obtaining subsequent pastoral leadership.

When a congregation plans to elect a retiring pastor as Pastor Emeritus, the material in II.A.3. on pages five and six of this document, concerning the meaning of "Pastor Emeritus," will be sent to the congregation and a representative of the committee on Ministry will be available to interpret the statement if that is desired.

c. To the Interim and Next Installed Pastors

It will be important for the committee on ministry to review these guidelines with the interim pastor and the next installed pastor and to be available for counsel should any difficulties arise regarding relationships with the former pastor.

This paper (policy) has been prepared in the hope that it will provide guidance, support, and encouragement to pastors, sessions, and congregations in those situations in which a pastor and congregation discover that they must say goodbye.

III. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kirk, R. J. "Pastor and Congregation Face Retirement" in *Special Papers and Research; Reports*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). *Standards of Ethical Conduct* (Approved by the 210th General Assembly, 1998, Presbyterian Church U.S.A.). Louisville: Office of General Assembly, 1998.

Oswald, Roy M. *Running Through the Thistles: Terminating a Ministerial Relationship with a Parish*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998

White, Edward. *Saying Goodbye, A Time of Growth for Congregation and Pastors*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998.

IV. RELEVANT BOOK OF ORDER REFERENCES

G-2.0801 Pastoral Vacancy

When a congregation has a vacancy in a pastoral position, or after the presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution of an existing pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the presbytery, proceed to fill the vacancy in the following manner.

G-2.0802 Election of a Pastor Nominating Committee

The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee that shall be representative of the whole congregation. The committee's duty shall be to nominate a pastor for election by the congregation.

G-2.0803 Call Process

According to the process of the presbytery and prior to making its report to the congregation, the pastor nominating committee shall receive and consider the presbytery's counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call. When the way is clear for the committee to report to the congregation, the committee shall notify the session, which shall call a congregational meeting.

G-2.0504b. Temporary Pastoral Relationships

Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a teaching elder, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place. Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.

G-2.0905 Officiate by Invitation Only

After the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide their pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of session.

P-100.07

MINISTER OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT MEMBER PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL SECURITY (Oct 1988, Revised October 2017)

It is assumed that all minister of the Word and Sacrament members of the Presbytery will participate in Social Security. This policy relates to the policies and practices of the Board of Pensions whose benefits and extended coverage schedules are predicated on their participation in Social Security.

Furthermore, the Presbytery also recognizes that minister of the Word and Sacrament, for reasons of conscience only, may waive their coverage under Social Security; but where that waiver is exercised the Presbytery, in relationship to the Board of Pensions, is released from any financial liabilities incurred by those who exercise their right of waiver.

When Social Security participation is waived by a minister of the Word and Sacrament of the Presbytery, a copy of the Waiver of Social Security, required by the Board of Pensions, becomes part of that minister of the Word and Sacrament's file.

P-100.08

POLICY OF UNDERSTANDING ON RULING ELDERS SERVING COMMUNION (March 2012, Revised October 2017)

According to the Book of Order G-3.0301b and W-3.0410:

- A. Ruling elders authorized to administer or preside at the Lord's Supper will obtain appropriate training from an authorized PC(USA) teaching elder who is a validated member of the presbytery. Appropriate training and education will include:
 - Pertinent reference to the Lord's Supper in the *Book of Confessions*, the *Directory for Worship*, and liturgical text as in the *Book for Common Worship*.
 - Talking through and observed practice in presiding over the Lord's Supper, demonstrated ability to administer the Sacrament and model it for others, and informal certification to the Congregational Pod by the Minister of the Word and Sacrament providing training.
- B. Ruling elders will not be authorized to administer or preside at the Lord's Supper in congregations actively served by a Minister of the Word and Sacrament. Authorization "just in case" there is an absence of a teaching elder, or to administer the Sacrament during vacations of a teaching elder, shall not occur.
- C. Ruling elders authorized to administer or preside at the Lord's Supper will cease to be authorized upon the arrival of a called pastor to the congregation, or when a temporary pastor relationship is established.
- D. Ruling elders are authorized for one year only but can be re-authorized for one year periods by presbytery action.
- E. Refresher training will be encouraged every three years prior to reauthorization by presbytery.