



**Memorandum of Understanding**  
**Statement of Ethics for Former Pastors**  
**Committee on Ministry**

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When a pastor leaves a church, there are bonds of affection between the minister and members of the church which continue to be cherished. Relationships of friendship continue, but the pastoral relationship does not. The Committee on Ministry recognizes there are potentially difficult situations involving the relationship of the minister and his/her former congregation. This also applies for associate pastors and temporary pastor situations. In order to assist the pastor and the congregation to avoid awkward situations and to encourage the new pastoral relationship that will be established, the following ethics have been adopted by the Committee on Ministry:

1. For the health and welfare of the church, it is important that the former pastor and his/her family find another church to attend. The former pastor's continued presence in the life of the church almost always hinders the congregation and the incoming pastor in developing the necessary relationship for successful ministry. This can be a difficult and painful event for the former pastor and his/her family. However, considering the needs of the church, the best interests of all involved are better served by the former pastor and family participating in another church.
2. The former pastor shall avoid all conversation and communication (including social media posts and messages) with church members about the new pastor, as well as problems and issues regarding the former church. If approached, the former pastor needs to tactfully explain that ethics do not permit such a discussion.
3. Participation by a former pastor for any pastoral function shall be only at the initiation and invitation of the moderator of session, in consultation with the Committee on Ministry. In almost every instance, the former pastor should avoid participation in funerals, weddings, baptisms, etc. for members of the former church. This practice will be difficult, but, if the first invitation is accepted, there is little reason to refuse other requests. At all times, the former pastor should remain sensitive to possible tension that can arise from his/her presence in the former church. In short, church members should not request a former pastor to perform pastoral duties. If requested, the former pastor should tactfully decline.
4. While friendships with former congregants continue, former pastors should be (keenly) aware of the need to carefully navigate his/her use of social media. In addition to refraining from engagement with congregants concerning the new pastor or current problems and issues with the church, the former pastor should exercise good judgment and care in everyday social media use. This includes, but is not limited to,
  - a. Using social media to communicate with individual friends, but not posting on the Church's pages or accounts;
  - b. Being aware that different generations have varied perspectives on social media use;
  - c. Generally being in the responsive mode rather than initiating contact with former members; and
  - d. Refraining from soliciting social media contact with a large percentage of church members upon leaving a congregation.



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5. The Committee on Ministry welcomes and encourages consultation, interpretation or resolution regarding these ethics as needed by session, congregations, former pastors or incoming pastors.
6. Representatives of the Committee on Ministry shall review and provide a copy of these ethics to departing pastors and to sessions prior to the election of a Pastor Nominating Committee. In addition, a letter regarding these ethics shall be shared with the congregation.
7. Representatives of the Committee on Ministry shall inform incoming pastors and provide them with a copy of these ethics prior to their reception into the Presbytery of Denver. A signed verification shall be retained in COM files.
8. Pastor's verification: I hereby verify that I have received a copy of the Statement of Ethics for Former Pastors. I further verify that I fully understand and will abide by the Statement of Ethics for Former Pastors.

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Moderator of the Session

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Representative of the Committee on Ministry

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Clerk of Session

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date