



## Chapter 1: Saying Goodbye

### CONTENTS

Introduction: Saying Goodbye.....	page 2
COM Liaison Meeting with the Session .....	page 2
Recommended Outline of the Congregational Meeting .....	page 4
A Sample Service of Dissolution .....	page 5
A Sample Service of Worship and Recognition of Honorable Retirement .....	page 7
A Sample Minute for Mission .....	page 9
Exit Interview with the Pastor by COM Representative .....	page 11
Guidelines for Former Pastors .....	page 13



## INTRODUCTION

Before proceeding with this chapter, it is essential that the reader review the overall narrative summary “**Definition of Roles for Pastor Search/Call Process**” and flow chart “**The Presbytery of Denver Journey Between Pastors Process**”(JBP) found on in the Preface and Definition of Terms Section of the Journey Between Pastors document. This narrative discusses the overall step from initial meetings with the departing pastor, through the search for temporary leaders, the formation of a Pastor Nominating Committee and other steps that are important. The narrative table replaces the former “Suggested Checklist” in this chapter.

### COM LIAISON MEETING WITH THE SESSION

**Be sure to discuss the following items with the Session:**

The COM liaison will represent the Presbytery, sharing information, giving counsel, service as a communications link between the congregation and the larger church. The COM liaison should review the Definition of Roles for Pastor Search/Call Process and the Presbytery of Denver Journey Between Pastors Process flow chart. These two documents summarize the overall search process and the eventual Pastor Nominating Committee process that will be used to call the installed pastor. Normally a church will seek an Interim pastor before the formation of a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). The Interim search is conducted by Elders on Session assisted by the COM Liaison and Presbytery. See especially JBP Chapter 2 “Seeking Temporary Leadership” and the section titled “**Denver Presbytery Interim Ministry Selection Process.**” This information provides a summary overview of the search process, from temporary leadership to installed leadership.

It will be necessary for the Session to call a meeting of the congregation to announce the departure of the pastor and the next steps. The Pastor has the responsibility of notifying the congregation of his/her decision to leave; the session notifies the congregation of the date of the congregational meeting.

The Session makes arrangements, in consultation with the liaison of COM, to provide a different moderator for the congregational meeting. This is not necessary, but advised. It is helpful when someone else can fill the role of moderator when the current moderator is planning to leave.

The Session will discuss *the following* terminating arrangements with the Pastor:

- date through which Pension Board payments will be made
- Note: Pension payments will continue to be paid by the church at a reduced rate during the vacancy period (vacancy dues)
- date through which the Pastor will be available for pastoral services
- date of the final Sunday
- unused vacation leave (It is customary for the pastor to either use this leave or cash it out. Sometimes the pastor will use unused vacation following a final Sunday in order to continue to receive some salary during a move. Sometimes the pastor will accept a check and the final day of work is also the final day of salaried employment.)



- unused continuing education leave (It is not customary to use or “cash out” unused continuing education leave or other expense accounts.)

Discuss how the Session helps the church say goodbye. The pastor and congregation may experience grief over a feeling of over loss or events which have occurred. Shock, denial, anger, and hurt are common. The Session needs to be prepared to help the congregation move through this time, recognizing that individuals will be in different places at any one moment.

- (a) Who are the individuals in need of special care? (Often elderly members may experience a deep sense of abandonment. Consider making personal visits on particular members.)
- (b) In addition to the Service of Dissolution, how will the congregation celebrate and say “thank you” to the Pastor (a party, dinner, the giving of gifts, and a service of worship)?
  - a book of letters from church
  - members, friends, Presbytery and community associates
  - a church family photo album
  - a quilt from the church family
  - a cash gift
  - recognition as Pastor Emeritus if Pastor is retiring. This is generally best done after the Pastor’s retirement.)

The COM liaison is encouraged to be invited to be present for and participate in the final Worship Service.

Discuss how the Session makes arrangements for pulpit supply. Review the Presbytery website for *information on the current honorarium and a list of pulpit supplies*.

The COM will make arrangements to have a liaison present at the congregational meeting to dissolve the relationship or at one of the first two worship services after the pastor has left, if desired, to offer a Minute for Mission during the service.

The Session will make arrangements with the COM to explore options regarding temporary pastoral leadership through an Interim Pastor, Temporary Supply, Commissioned Ruling Elder, etc. COM policies state that normally an Interim will be required and the full Journey Between Pastors process is used to lead the Church through the transition. However, pulpit supply or temporary supply may be used until such time as a Session discerns its situation clearly enough to propose temporary pastoral leadership to the Committee on Ministry. The COM must approve any transitional leadership model to be used. See in particular the discussion in Chapter 2, on Denver Presbytery’s Interim Ministry Selection Process discussion.

The Session will notify the Board of Pensions about the termination date. ***Vacancy dues will continue to be paid by the church to the Board of Pensions for 12 months after the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, or until an interim or pastor is called, whichever comes first.***



Following is an example of a congregational meeting to dissolve the relationship. Also is an example of a service of recognition upon retirement which may be held at the church or at an Assembly meeting.

### **RECOMMENDED OUTLINE OF THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

#### **Purpose – To Dissolve relationship**

#### **SAMPLE**

Call to Order – Establishment of a Quorum

Opening Prayer

Moderator or Clerk: Read the stated purpose of the congregational meeting.

MOTION: To concur and to request the Presbytery of Denver to concur in the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church, effective \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_.

COM Representative discusses the information found on the Minute for Mission informational piece.

Announcements

MOTION: Approve minutes of the meeting.

MOTION: To adjourn.

Closing Prayer



## **A SAMPLE SERVICE OF DISSOLUTION**

**See:** *The Book of Occasional Services: A Liturgical Resource Supplementing the Book of Common Worship*, Geneva Press, Louisville, KY, 1993, pp. 244-248.

### **Session Representative:**

Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. Children grow up. People commit themselves to one another. Loved ones and friends among us come to the end of their lives. Individuals move into our community and church life. Others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities. It is important and right we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share the time of farewell with friends (a friend) who are leaving.

### **Presbytery Representative:**

In \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_, the congregation called the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ to serve as its Pastor (Associate Pastor). I thank all of you members and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church. Your kindness and support, your caring and love have sustained me over these past years, and I shall remember you with deep gratitude.

**Presbytery Rep:** Good Christian people, I bid you now to pray for the saving presence of our living Lord: In this world.

Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.

**Presbytery Rep:** In this congregation

Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.

**Presbytery Rep:** In this community

Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.

**Presbytery Rep:** In the homes and hearts of all your people

Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.

***Pastor: I bid you to pray with me now for the mercy of the Lord: For things not finished***

Congregation: LORD HAVE MERCY.

***Pastor: For expectations not met***

Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.

***Pastor: For wounds not healed***

Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.

***Pastor: For gifts not given***

Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.

***Pastor: For promises not kept***

Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.

**Session Rep.:** I bid you to pray in thanks for our journey together in this place: For friendships made, for joys celebrated and for times of nurture and growth

Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.



Session Rep.: For wounds healed, expectations met, gifts given and promises kept  
Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.  
Session Rep.: For each other, and for God's love which has sustained us  
Congregation: BE PRESENT, LORD.  
Session Rep.: Do you, the members and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian  
Church of \_\_\_\_\_, now release the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_  
from service as your Pastor (Associate Pastor)?

6

Congregation: WE DO, WITH THANKS TO GOD.  
Session Rep.: Do you, \_\_\_\_\_, now recognize and accept the  
completion of your ministry with this people as their Pastor (Associate  
Pastor)?

Pastor: I do, with thanks to God.

Presbytery Rep.: On behalf of Presbytery of Denver, I witness to the words spoken here:  
words of thanksgiving, of forgiveness and release. The Presbytery  
celebrates with all of you that has been found here of new life and hope in  
your journey together as Pastor (Associate Pastor) and people and we  
pledge to you, our brothers and sisters, our continued support and  
prayers. I declare, with thanks to God for the life and ministry of this  
congregation and the ministry of its faithful servant \_\_\_\_\_,  
and with a sense of hope for God's abiding grace in the future that the  
pastoral relationship is now dissolved and that this pulpit is declared  
vacant as of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

Pastor: And now our journeys lead us on in separate ways, yet always bound  
together with all who call Christ Lord. God in peace.  
Congregation: GO IN PEACE.

Presbytery Rep.: So, with God's help and love, may your works be blessed and your labor  
fruitful, as you offer yourselves gladly into the service of our common Lord.  
Let us pray together:

All: O GOD, OUR ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS ARE ROOTED IN YOUR LOVE. YOU ARE  
ALPHA AND OMEGA, BOTH BEGINNING AND END. SO, WHETHER NEAR OR FAR, WE  
ARE ALWAYS HELD BY YOUR LOVE AND SO ARE SAFE FROM ANY LASTING LOSS.  
END THIS TIME TOGETHER WITH YOUR BLESSINGS, TOUCH ALL MEMORIES WITH  
YOUR GRACE AND PEACE. HELP US TO LIVE IN THE NEW FUTURES YOU GIVE US  
WITH COURAGE AND GLAD HEARTS. AND GRANT THAT, IN EVERY NEW TIME YOU  
GIVE US, WE MAY OFFER YOU OUR HIGHEST AND OUR BEST. TOGETHER, ALWAYS,  
IN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. ALLELUIA! AMEN.



## **A SAMPLE SERVICE OF WORSHIP AND RECOGNITION OF HONORABLE RETIREMENT**

(For use at the church or at a Presbytery Assembly)

(see Book of Occasional Service, pages 279-281)

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

MODERATOR: There are different gifts,  
But it is the same Spirit who gives them.  
There are different ways of serving God,  
But it is the same Lord who is served.  
God works through different people in different ways,  
But it is the same God whose purpose is achieved through them all.

PRAYER: *By Your will, O God, we go out into the world with good news of Your undying love and minister among Your children to show the wonders of Your grace. We pray for all who minister for You. Replenish them with the truth of Your doctrine, endue them with holiness of life and strengthen them with the knowledge of Your care and fellowship. May they be brave, glad and hopeful in Your presence; through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen*

### **DECLARATION**

MODERATOR: In the name of Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, we recognize the honorable retirement of \_\_\_\_\_ in accordance with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the action of this Presbytery. Remembering that God alone is the Judge of the stewardship of everyone's gifts and life, we, the members of the Presbytery of Denver, express our appreciation for your faithful service and acknowledge the privilege we enjoyed in serving with you. Beloved in Christ, inasmuch as God's good news has brought you to years of Christian maturity in the gospel ministry, the Presbytery of Denver, in granting your request of retirement, desires to make public acknowledgement of your service to the Kingdom of God.

*Hear a member of the Presbytery, and a member of the congregation make appropriate remarks about the life and ministry of the person being honorable retired, setting forth pertinent information about college and seminary education, marriage, family, pastorates, other forms of ministry, or special contributions to the church. The person retiring may be given an opportunity to respond. The Moderator shall ask the Presbytery to stand and respond appropriately.*



## LITANY OF RECOGNITION

O God, Creator of all things visible and invisible and Lord of history, You have called us by the voice of the Church to serve Jesus Christ and revealed to us this work for which we have been chosen.

**Thanks be to God.**

Holy Spirit, You have given us the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be a unique and authoritative Witness to Jesus Christ and we have accepted them to be God's Word for us.

**Thanks be to God**

Master and Teacher, You have enlisted us in Your service and instructed us by the church and her confessions so that we might lead others, be a friend, love our neighbors and work for reconciliation in the world.

**Thanks be to God**

Lord of the church, Your servant, \_\_\_\_\_, stands today among us after serving long and well in your church. This life and ministry have revealed the Risen Christ to many, provided many personal satisfactions, warmed individual hearts in close relationship, and brought self-worth and dignity through love shared.

**Thanks be to God**

God, in whom we live and have our being, continue to give Your servant and loved ones a full measure of Your grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## PRAYER

*Eternal God and Lord of us all, through the ages women and men have been called to witness to Your love and to give evidence of Your kindness to Your people. We honor such servants today. Your church has been enriched by their wisdom, their energy, their sensitivity, their love of Your Word, and their obedience to Your spirit. Your strength has been made evident in their weaknesses. Your forgiveness has been illustrated in their failures. Your power has been visible in their strengths and virtues. Their lives have unveiled Your splendor for Your people to see You at work in the lives of Your servants. For your manifestation in their lives and ministries, we give Your thanks, O Lord.*

*We are grateful that the years ahead for these servants will be less filled with pressure and tedium, and that they may enjoy a new measure of Your peace. Help them to be happy stewards of their leisure. Bless them with good health. Teach them new uses of their time. Continue to use them for the constructive purposes of Your Kingdom. Surround them with the continued comradeship of their friends and colleagues. As they have Served You with joy and faithfulness, may they continue to know the happiness of Your presence with them. May they cheerfully conform in all things to Your blessed will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## DOXOLOGY





## **PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF RETIREMENT**

The certificate of honorable retirement is presented by the Moderator, Stated Clerk, or Chair of the Committee on Ministry. The retiree is asked to offer the benediction.

## **BENEDICTION**

### **A SAMPLE MINUTE FOR MISSION**

The COM liaison will normally provide a minute for mission on behalf of the Committee on Ministry to describe the overall process that will be used during this time of transition. The following is a sample that may be modified to fit the specific as appropriate.

On behalf of the Presbytery of Denver and the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry, I bring you greetings today.

When a pastor leaves a church there are bonds of affection between the minister and members of the Church which continue to be cherished. Relations of friendship continue, but the pastoral relationship does not. In order to spare ministers and church members from embarrassment, and to encourage the new pastoral Relationship that will be established, the Presbytery directs that the church be reminded of these requests:

When any minister resigns from a pastorate or retires from service, or becomes a pastor emeritus, the minister should cease to perform such functions of a pastor as funerals, baptism, and weddings, unless invited to officiate in such capacity by the current pastor or by the moderator of the session.

In short, church members should not request a former pastor to perform pastoral duties. If requested, pastor should tactfully decline, unless the request is made, without prompting, by the Moderator of Session.

As you begin a new journey as a congregation, I am here today to tell you that, in the Presbytery, you will have a partner along the way. We are a connectional church and one of the most visible ways we express our connectedness is in calling of ministers to serve our pulpits. There are many decisions that lie ahead and, as you make those decisions, the Presbytery will do its very best to support you and guide you.

I am also here to give you an idea of the steps that lie ahead. As a Representative from the Committee on Ministry, I have already met (will be meeting) with your Session. Their first task will be to arrange for pulpit supply, temporary supply and pastoral care. This temporary arrangement may last anywhere from a few weeks to several months. The Presbytery will assist Session in locating guest preachers.

When going through change, as you will be doing, a trained Interim Pastor should be selected to see you through the transition time. An Interim Pastor is one who can give you steady preaching and



pastoral care, is willing to live and work among you for an interval and then move on to assist another congregation in transition. Your Session has considered (will be considering) the selection of an Interim Pastor. The Presbytery will assist in providing names of Interim Pastors to consider. Your session will be considering various options related to pastoral service, based on your needs.

When the time comes to begin your active search for your next installed pastor, whomever he or she may be, a Liaison from the Committee on Ministry will be appointed and you will be using a process known as the Journey Between Pastors to help you in the transition.

The first phase is a “Congregational Preparation Phase.” In this case, all of you will be asked to help shape a vision for the kind of ministry you want and the kind of minister you will need to lead you. You will be conducting a time of reflection on the ministry of your church. In our Presbytery this is called the 12 Strategic Planning Questions which have replaced the former “Mission Study.”

The questions will help you focus on your needs as a congregation and your general goals for the future. The Presbytery will help you assess your needs through their work with the Session or its appointed committee.

The second phase could be called the “Search Phase.” This begins with the election of a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), followed by the completion of some papers that will be used in establishing conversation with potential candidates. The PNC will be elected by you and trained by the Committee on Ministry through, your COM Liaison. The PNC will then advertise the position, receive names of potential candidates, read papers, talk with references, and eventually interview several finalists. During this phase, you should hear periodic reports from the committee, even though most of the work is of a confidential nature. The Presbytery, the Committee on Ministry, the synod, and the General Assembly all work together to help you in this phase which can take months to completely thoroughly.

The final phase is the “Candidating Phase.” At this point, the PNC will select a candidate to present to you. A committee of the Presbytery must examine and approve all candidates. Then the PNC will ask the session to call a congregational meeting and present information to you about their candidate. The candidate will be asked to preach. And at the congregational meeting, you will be asked to endorse or not endorse the committee’s nominee. Assuming that you select the nominee, then the Presbytery will be requested to approve the call. After this is completed, plans can be made for your new minister to begin his or her work.

As your new pastor begins work, the Presbytery will be with you to celebrate at his/her installation to office. This kind of change can be difficult for a congregation. The Committee on Ministry seeks to make this transition time as easy as possible. Please know that you are in our prayers. Thank you.



## EXIT INTERVIEW WITH THE PASTOR By COM Representative

A written report needs to be submitted to the Presbytery Stated Clerk's office  
Within two weeks of the interview.

*The purpose of the interview is to ask the departing pastor to share his/her perspectives on their ministry and the congregation that he/she served. This is not an inquisition but rather an effort to obtain from the departing pastor information that might be useful to the Committee on Ministry as they work with the congregation through transition.*

Please include the information, such as the following, in your conversation/report with the departing pastor.

Date of exit interview

Minister's name

Name of church

Approximate number of members

Average worship attendance

Reasons for leaving (be specific)

Was the position what you expected when you were called? Why or why not?

What did you like most about the church?

What did you like least about the church?

Do you think the church is healthy and has grown, or is it a problem church? (Explain)

Please comment on the current staffing pattern at the church



Does the church have strong lay leadership in the congregation? In the Session?

Are there any strong cliques, splits, or beliefs in membership?

What qualities and interests will be most important in the new pastor?

Do you have other concerns, suggestions, etc. you would like to discuss?

Are there any messages you would like to convey to the COM regarding you or your congregations' relationship to the Presbytery?

*Review the "Guidelines for former Pastors" a copy of their signed "Memorandum of Understanding: Statement of Ethics for former Pastors" found on the Presbytery website*  
<http://denpres.org/#committee-on-ministry-section>

Do you have any final comments?

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_



**Submit written report to Stated Clerk within two weeks of the exit interview**

## **GUIDELINES FOR FORMER PASTORS**

The COM is charged to review ethical guidelines for pastors and churches in transition, making them available to every minister member of Denver Presbytery. The Presbytery's policy "Memorandum of Understanding – Statement of Ethics for Former Pastors" is very clear about the relationship of the former pastor to the church they are leaving. This memorandum of ethics is signed by the departing pastor and given to the COM liaison.

The times of change and transition can be a complicated mix of hope and celebration as well as grief and renewal. It impacts the congregation, the former pastor and the incoming pastor in different ways. Each has a significant role to play in making the transition as healthy as possible.

These ethical guidelines are offered in the spirit of honoring all three entities with care and compassion in upholding the church.

- a. The former pastor shall select a new church to attend on a regular basis.
- b. The former pastor shall encourage his/her family to select another church in which to hold membership.
- c. The former pastor shall refrain from all conversations about the incoming pastor or the church. The intent is to provide protection for the former pastor while allowing the incoming pastor to establish necessary relationships within the congregation. The pastor and his/her family should refrain from active participating in Social Media connected to the former pastor's church.
- d. The congregation shall honor the call of the incoming pastor by refraining from conversation about the church or requesting pastoral functions from the former pastor.
- e. The congregation will handle questions and disagreements that change creates with the incoming pastor.
- f. The incoming pastor shall be responsible for all pastoral functions including visitation, weddings, funerals, baptisms and any other church functions. Any participation by the former pastor in any pastoral function shall be at the discretion and initiation of the incoming pastor, rather than by a church/family member or by the former pastor.



- g. The COM is available for consultation, interpretation, or resolution as needed by the congregation, the former pastor, or the incoming pastor.

The “Memorandum of Understanding: Statement of Ethics For Former Pastors” is available on the Presbytery website at: <http://denpres.org/#committee-on-ministry->