

SECTION A: HEALTHY TRANSITIONS

PART I: RESOURCES FOR HEALTHY TERMINATION OF CALL

Meet with the Assistant to the Bishop for an orientation regarding the Pastoral Transition Process.

This should be scheduled as soon as possible following the announcement from your pastor that they are leaving, or in the event of a planned upcoming transition. This meeting would typically be with the Congregation Council.

Expectations of a Departing Pastor

When a pastor resigns from their congregation, the relationship between the parishioners and that pastor changes significantly. Both the congregation and the pastor need to recognize this change. Pastors who have accepted a call to a new parish can balance the grief of ending this relationship with the anticipation of forming new relationships and new opportunities for ministry. However, pastors who resign for other reasons (e.g., retirement, call to special service, or on leave from call) often are reluctant to transfer their membership and believe they and their spouses can remain as members of the congregation they served as pastor.

For the benefit of all, it is the expectation of the Metropolitan New York Synod that when a pastor resigns from a parish, they will transfer membership to another congregation. It is hoped that the pastor will be open to using the gifts God has bestowed on them in this new parish.

Parishioners who were close to their former pastor often want to continue the pastoral relationship at their family's baptism, wedding, or funeral. **It is expected that pastors will decline to perform any pastoral acts in their former congregation or for their former parishioners, unless requested by the pastor currently serving that congregation.** We expect pastors to be cautious about involvement even when invited, and to exercise good judgment.

After the resignation has been announced, but before the time of leaving, it would be helpful to include in the **parish newsletter and in several Sunday worship bulletins** a statement that the pastor will not be available to conduct or participate in events such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, hospital calls, emergency calls, or any other pastoral functions.

Close friendships that have developed over the years do not need to be terminated. However, it must be clear that these friendships cannot include any discussion of the affairs of the parish and/or of the leadership of the new pastor with his or her former parishioners. Nor is it appropriate for the former pastor to provide any personal pastoral care.

Financial and practical issues need to be settled before a pastor leaves the congregation. Unused vacation time can be taken prior to leaving. If that is not possible, the departing pastor shall be paid for accrued vacation time. Continuing education time and monies end upon the termination of that pastorate, and the resigning pastor may not take such funds with them. Matters such as repayment of a housing loan or a specific date for moving from a parsonage must be agreed upon by the Congregation Council. Pastors are urged to not enter into trust or fiduciary relationships with their parishioners. However, if such a relationship exists, it should be terminated before the pastor leaves.

The presence of a former pastor at the installation of a new pastor is not recommended. Former pastor(s) may be invited to return for special parish events (i.e., Congregation Anniversaries).

When a problem arises, the Mutual Ministry Committee should be consulted first. If necessary, the Office of the Bishop should be consulted for guidance in resolving the issue. A Rite of Farewell and Godspeed will help to emphasize the termination of this pastoral relationship and may be offered during the resigning pastor's last Eucharist.

CHECKLIST FOR THE DEPARTING PASTOR

CHECKLIST FOR THE CONGREGATION PRESIDENT





**COVENANT BETWEEN
THE DEPARTING PASTOR (NOT RETIRING)
AND THE CONGREGATION**

**COVENANT BETWEEN
THE CONGREGATION
AND THE DEPARTING PASTOR**

**COVENANT BETWEEN
THE RETIRING PASTOR
AND THE CONGREGATION**



NOTES AND REFLECTIONS FOR RETIRING PASTORS, FROM BISHOP EGENSTEINER

"Old preachers never die; they just go out to pastor."

This is coffee mug wisdom. In its own, simple way, it talks about how hard it is for most clergy to retire, to move on to a new phase of life that not only brings with it uncertainties about the future but a question of identity, as well. I recall, as I contemplated retirement, a feeling of... would "dread" be too strong a word? I asked myself, "Who am I if I am not pastor to a particular community of God's people?" So much of our sense of self is tied to our call. We form deep relationships by accompanying "our" (God's) people through the best and worst experiences of life. The holy rhythm of weekly worship and the honor and respect still given to most pastors, at least within the church family, helps us to fill that vital human need of making a difference, being valued. Our congregations and ministry sites are our primary community. If our call has brought us far from our biological family, there can be a temptation to allow our congregations and relationships and friendships formed within them to be our primary emotional support, as well. Often, our call as pastor involves a call to the wider community—civic, ecumenical and interfaith. Moving out of those communities and making space for the person who will follow us can be deeply unsettling. That's the reality. It's important to remember, at this time of your own personal transition, that your feelings about this are not wrong. **It is how you respond to those feelings, what you do as a result of them, that will make the transition for you, your family and the people you have served life-giving or not.**

Hopefully, by now, you have reviewed the [Covenant between the Retiring Pastor and the Congregation](#). I encourage you to read it again; it's a lot to absorb. It should not be signed with any reservation on your part about what you are agreeing to. While we might want to rationalize that "our situation was different," the reliable experience of the Church is that agreeing to and honoring this particular promise has proven

itself time and time again to be necessary for the health of the ministry from which you are retiring. I also encourage you, once you have begun to understand the need for this covenant, to spend some time with your congregational leadership discussing it. An open and honest discussion, in which you affirm clear boundaries, gives you the opportunity to continue to pastor them into what will be one of the most challenging experiences of their life as a congregation.

After I was elected your bishop, I had a little over two months to make the transition from being pastor of Emanuel (where I had served for twenty-three years). One of the perspectives that helped me, not only personally but also in conversation with parishioners, was to understand that, though we were moving apart, we were still traveling to the same destination as part of the same family, just along different paths. And God would be accompanying both of us. Retirement can be understood in much the same way. As departing minister, your path may be less certain, but God will be with all of you in these new opportunities.

Here are some suggestions from my colleague, Bishop James Hazelwood of the New England Synod (edited in some cases), that might prove helpful for you:

Leaving well can be one of your greatest gifts to yourself and the ministry you have served. Say goodbye to shut-ins, have last suppers (sorry for the pun), enjoy that last church council meeting (perhaps in ways you have never been able to before!), and mark these events with honesty and an appropriate ritual. These are gifts to yourself and the congregation, as they mark the formal end of your pastoral relationship with the people of the parish. *Likewise, it's essential that you not be involved in any way in the planning of the transition, the search for a new pastor, or the business of the congregation after your departure.* You can and should trust that God,

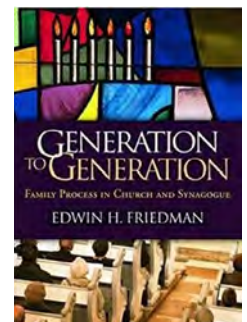
through the ministry of others, can handle it without you. Hopefully you have already done thinking and planning for a transfer of membership to a different congregation for you and your spouse as soon as you retire. It needs to be done, for you and for the congregation. It's really quite impossible to be a lay member of the congregation that you last served without getting pulled in or jumping into your role as pastor again. In every situation where someone has attempted to do this, it results in problems, confusion and an inability for the congregation to move into its next chapter. Besides, you're retiring! Find a new focus for your energy, enthusiasm and gifts. You have an opportunity to live out your faith in new ways and among new people.

Bishop Hazelwood's story: When I left my congregation, after nearly 20 years of service, I received an email asking me to preside at the funeral of a member. I said, "No, I am sorry, I am unable to do that for you." About three months later, the mother of a young woman whom I had confirmed, called and asked if I would perform the wedding ceremony. I said, "No, I am sorry, I cannot do that." In both situations, I simply explained that I am no longer the pastor, that I am honored to be asked, but I'm going to decline. If I say yes to one, then I have to say yes to all, and that's just not right. I learned early on that it was not helpful to say: "I will do it if it is OK with the new pastor". This comment is unfair and puts new pastors in a no-win situation. If they say yes, they are relinquishing their office to a person who is not the pastor, and if they say no—they seem cold, unloving and threatened. I found the best response to be: "It is not appropriate for me to do that since I am no longer your pastor," or something like that.



1. Please remember that your spouse is grieving, too, and maybe your entire family. Our two sons, who had grown up at Emanuel, left before we did because of life changes. They lamented the fact that they "couldn't find another congregation like Emanuel." Was that because Emanuel was such a special place? Partly. But it had more to do with the fact that they had a special relationship to the congregation (usually in a good way!) because I was the pastor. It is very difficult for a congregation to get to know and trust a new pastor, while wondering what the former pastor's spouse or other family members are thinking and feeling. It will be tempting to stay because of the relationships in the congregation. But, for the health of the Church, understand how important it is to allow the congregation the space that it needs to form a strong pastoral relationship with the new leader.
2. You may certainly return to the congregation for an event, if your successor invites you to do so, and even then I suggest this happen only after years have passed since your departure and then as guest and not as presider or officiant (except in very rare circumstances). When boundaries are honored scrupulously in early years, it is possible for a former pastor to return as a member sometime in the future, and be a valued and honored resource for the community. Remember, though, those diverging paths. As time goes by and there are fewer common experiences to share, it just feels different, maybe even a little awkward, because it is. Always, your decision to be part of an event in your former congregation should be for their sake, determined in conversation with your successor, and not to meet your own needs or unfulfilled longings.

(Bishop Hazelwood recommends reading Edwin Friedman's book, *Generation to Generation*, particularly Chapter 10: "Leaving and Entering a Congregational System.")



If all of this sounds difficult, that's because it is. The more intense the experiences shared, the harder to take those divergent paths. But, as a good shepherd, you have a sense of what it means to "lay down your life (or at least your pastoral call) for the sake of the sheep." **This transition may be your last and certainly one of your most important opportunities to show them how much you love them.**

Please know that, as *your* pastor (and one who has been through these transitions myself), I am here to help, to listen, to offer my shoulder or whatever else you need. This is true for my entire staff. **You will get through this and, hopefully, enjoy a long, healthy and fulfilling retirement, serving the Lord in new and exciting ways.**

RESOURCES

People

****For more information and/or assistance, contact the Assistant to the Bishop assigned to your Conference, and also consult with your Conference Dean****

Books and Audio

Running Through the Thistles: Terminating a Ministerial Relationship with a Parish (Roy M. Oswald; Alban Institute)

Saying Goodbye: A Time for Growth for Congregations and Pastors (Edward A. White; Alban Institute)

A Change of Pastors: and How it Affects Change in the Congregation (Loren B. Mead; Alban Institute)

Beginning Ministry Together: The Alban Institute Handbook for Clergy Transitions (Roy M. Oswald, James M. Heath and Ann W. Heath; Alban Institute)

The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions (Carolyn Weese and Russell Crabtree; J-B Leadership Network Series)

Ending Well, Starting Strong: Your Personal Pastorate Start-Up Workshop (Edward A. White; Alban Institute) six audio cassettes and study guide





TRANSITION PASTORS

When a vacancy in the primary pastoral call to a congregation occurs or is anticipated, a transitional pastor shall be appointed by the Bishop to assist the congregation and provide basic pastoral services during the transition. Notification of the appointment of a transitional pastor is to be made in writing to the congregation as soon as practicable following the announcement of the vacancy, but no later than the departing pastor's last Sunday.

If notice of the impending vacancy is short (fewer than 30 days), the Bishop will appoint a coverage pastor until the needs of the congregation can be discerned.

The time of transition will include a self-study process and evaluation by the congregation that will examine their strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and goals for ministry, and challenges for growth, as well as issues relevant to their situation, such as: transition issues following a long-term pastorate or relational conflict, changes or trends in the community or congregation, and especially the availability of financial resources to implement their vision.

Transitional ministry is described in four categories:

- A. Intentional Interim Pastor
- B. Interim Pastor
- C. Term-Call Pastor
- D. Coverage Pastor

INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTOR

During a pastoral vacancy, an intentional, **specially trained** interim may be recommended. Intentional Interim Pastors work with the congregation on specific issues prior to entry in the call process—and cannot be a candidate for the regular call. Once their tasks in a congregation are complete, they can bring their particular skills to other places of need within the church. Such a pastor should be paid according to the Metropolitan New York Synod **Compensation Guidelines**³, bearing in mind years of service and the cost of living in the area of service. The source of call shall be the synod council.

INTERIM PASTOR

During a pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor may be recommended to address the need in some congregations, for greater pastoral presence in the time of transitions, such as ongoing program or staffing needs or because of specific issues of transition. Interim pastors are appointed by the Bishop, with the consent of the congregation council. If the interim pastor's service is anticipated to last longer than a year, the synod council or congregation can extend a term-call. An interim pastor should be paid according to the Metropolitan New York Synod **Compensation Guidelines**³, bearing in mind years of service and the cost of living in the area of service. The source of call shall be the synod council.

³ <https://www.mnys.org/congregations/compensation-guidelines/>

TERM-CALL PASTOR

During a pastoral vacancy, a term-call pastor may be recommended to provide the duties associated with interim pastors, but also assumes a significant level of the day-to-day pastoral work that might be expected of a pastor under regular call. The Bishop may recommend for term-call a pastor who might be a suitable candidate for the regular call. Term-call pastors generally serve for 12 to 24 months or until the arrival of the newly called pastor (whichever comes first). If the term-call pastor is eligible for call in the congregation, when ready to consider candidates, the Call Committee shall determine if they will recommend the term-call pastor for the regular call. If they agree to receive the term-call pastor as a candidate, the congregation may not entertain other candidates until they have released this pastor as the candidate.

If they decline to recommend this candidate, the congregation may ask for the appointment of another transitional pastor at the conclusion of the term. Once the term-call call pastor is no longer a candidate, the congregation may continue the call process with either the one or three candidate options. If the term-call pastor will not be a candidate for the regular call, the source of the term-call shall be the Synod Council.

COVERAGE PASTOR

During a pastoral vacancy, a coverage pastor will assist the congregation in the administration of the basic operations of the congregation, meet with the congregation council, and provide for basic pastoral care and services. Ordinarily, the dean of the conference or another neighboring pastor will serve as the coverage pastor. The coverage pastor will be familiar with the transition and call process and will aid the congregation in understanding the process.

COVERAGE PASTOR (during a pastoral vacancy)

\$175/week for congregations with up to 250 active/confirmed members

\$225/week for congregations with over 250 active/confirmed members

PULPIT SUPPLY

\$175 for one worship service (morning or evening)

\$225 for two services (same day)

\$250 for three services (same day)

TRAVEL EXPENSES (mileage at the current IRS rate, tolls and parking if by car, or mass transit fares with receipt)

Notes for treasurers: (1.) This compensation should be recorded as 1099 income if it exceeds \$600 per year.

(2.) This compensation should be recorded as W-2 income.

(3.) Reimbursements by voucher do not trigger IRS recording. No form is issued.



LETTER OF AGREEMENT/COVENANT FOR
INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTORAL MINISTRY

LETTER OF AGREEMENT/COVENANT FOR
INTERIM PASTORAL MINISTRY

LETTER OF AGREEMENT/COVENANT FOR
TERM-CALL PASTORAL MINISTRY

LETTER OF AGREEMENT/COVENANT FOR
COVERAGE PASTORAL MINISTRY

COVENANT FOR ARRIVING PASTORS

SAMPLE LETTER:
Attestation of Record and Financial
Requirements

PART II: PASTORAL TRANSITION PROCESS

Establish a Transition Team

The **Transition Team** is responsible for the Pastoral Transition Process, including the drafting of the **Mission Site Profile (MSP)**. The Transition Team consists of 6-8 members (including a council member) with the following skills:

- Organization
- Strong communications
- Varied networking connections
- Positive outlook
- Creativity
- Strategic thinking
- Strong writing skills
- Knowledge of working with computers and the internet

The Ministry Site Profile

The first step in the process is the creation of the congregation's Ministry Site Profile. The Transition Team chair shall secure **a copy of the MSP form, available through the ELCA website⁴**, and convene the committee.

The Importance of Congregational Input

Although parts of the MSP can be assigned to individual members of the committee, it is important that there are times when the whole committee reviews and discusses the entire profile. Data should be collected, with as much congregational input as possible, through small group discussions, surveys, or other means of receiving feedback from members. It is best if the answers are concise, but it is important that they have been given thoughtful consideration and expressed in a comprehensive manner. Remember that this document is what the candidates will read as they decide whether or not to proceed in the call process with the congregation.

The Transition Team will meet throughout the Transition process and will spend time filling out the MSP form. Sometime after the "Play it Forward Event," the team is to release a first draft copy of the MSP to the entire congregation, and asks for feedback. The congregation is given one week to respond with their suggestions, thoughts, or reflections.

After one week of input, the Transition Team can revise the document. The final report should be submitted to the entire council for its review and possible revision, and be made available to members of the Call Committee. After the MSP has been approved by the congregation council, a copy shall be sent to the Assistant to the Bishop and submitted to the ELCA database. The Assistant to the Bishop may consult with the Call Committee to review the completed mission profile, discuss the hopes and vision of the congregation, and answer any remaining questions about the process.

⁴ <http://www.elca.org/en/Call-Process>

Conduct a Property Assessment for Congregations in Transition

The 2016 Synod Assembly added an addendum to the policy of the Metropolitan New York Synod on the Transition and Call Process that called for a property assessment for congregations in the transition and call process.

An independent, licensed architect/engineer OR a licensed/certified inspector will certify they have performed a cursory overview, similar to a home inspection performed during a real estate transaction, of the property and structures, to determine, most importantly, if any dangers are present.

This review will include:

1. A periphery inspection to determine if the conditions are satisfactory, need maintenance or repairs, or require significant/immediate attention.
 - a. Exterior (walkways, parking lots, windows, doors, siding, etc.)
 - b. Roofing
 - c. Structural (foundation, framing)
 - d. Electrical and Plumbing
 - e. Heating/Air Conditioning
2. A recommendation of commonly required regulatory licenses (i.e., assembly licenses) and permits (e.g., elevator inspection, building c/o's) that should be verified for compliance by the congregation.
3. If required and requested, a detailed analysis of the areas of concern for corrective action.
4. Review and validation of current insurance appraisal of all properties and review of all current insurance coverage policies.

A formal report should be provided to the Assistant to the Bishop in the Office of the Bishop.

Conduct a Financial Review for Congregations in Transition

The 2016 Synod Assembly added an addendum to the policy of the Metropolitan New York Synod on the Transition and Call Process that called for a financial review for congregations in the transition and call process. The financial review for the congregation is a two-, possibly three-phase process. Phases I & II are conducted by the congregation's Transition Team. Phase III (if necessary) is conducted by a financial professional.

Phase I: Basic Financial Viability

This information helps to assess the congregation's current financial position in the context of recent trends, and affords insight into the congregation's sustainability and future possibilities. Documents are gathered and submitted to the Office of the Bishop.

Please provide:

- A. Trend report from ELCA website
- B. List of council members and their offices/positions at three historical times: now, 5 years ago, 10 years ago
- C. Financial reports consisting of balance sheet, revenue and expense report, and restricted funds report for the most recent full fiscal year, and for equivalent times for 2, 5 and 10 years ago
- D. A recent sample payroll report (including regular 1099 payees)
- E. Most recent annual report to the congregation
- F. Most recent annual congregational report Form A
- G. A building/property assessment reasonably consistent with our current document.

Phase II: Business Management and Practices

This phase is best accomplished with an onsite visit. It provides a snapshot of the business practices of the congregation. This visit is coordinated by the Office of the Bishop.

Please provide:

- A. List of persons who now, 5 years ago and 10 years ago:
 - 1. Reconcile the bank statements
 - 2. Count and deposit the offering
 - 3. Authorize disbursements by check or other means
 - 4. Sign checks for forwarding to payee
 - 5. Prepare the financial reports
- B. A copy of the current congregational constitution
- C. Sample reconciliation report for each financial asset
- D. A sample, full bank statement for each financial asset (best if it is the last statement in the most recent full fiscal year)
- E. A sample loan statement for each congregation loan (if it exists)
- F. A sample credit card(s) statement for any in the congregation's name.
- G. A posting journal for the most recent three months (PDF)
- H. A sample Portico (or equivalent health and pension provider) invoice
- I. The most recent comprehensive/liability insurance policy declaration page(s)
- J. The most recent Federal 941 and State NYS-45 filings
- K. The most recent financial audit/review report

Phase III: Financial and Business Management Processes Review

Phase III of the review is conducted only if there are specific questions regarding financial and business management processes that surface during Phase I or II. This review would involve the engagement of a CPA literate in non-profit accounting.

Possible tasks related to the review:

- 1. Ask the bank(s) for a list of signers on the significant disbursement accounts
- 2. Obtain a posting journal for the most recent fiscal year (PDF)
- 3. Trace sample offering reports to the accounting records
- 4. Trace sample expense disbursements to the accounting records
- 5. Examine the offering donation record-keeping processes and associated security practices
- 6. Examine the processes for permitting usage of church property, including rent/lease agreements, and accounting for the revenue and associated expense
- 7. Verify proper handling and reporting of designated/restricted funds
- 8. Access Portico to determine the recorded compensation levels and the various benefit choices, and compare with synod guidelines
- 9. Examine the annual W-2 and 1099-Misc records for congregation payees, for reasonableness