

PRESBYTERY OF SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND

Commission ON MINISTRY

Pastors Who Resign, Retire or Complete Temporary Pastorates

Preamble

The life of every congregation is punctuated by the coming and going of ministers; and the professional life of most ministers is punctuated by several changes in positions. For both the congregation and the pastor, it is important for these transitions to take place in as healthy a way as possible. It is important that former clergy (pastor, co-pastor, associate pastor, youth pastor, candidate for ministry) do not become involved in any way in the life of the former congregation once an exit has occurred.

These following principles have been established to safeguard the vitality of the congregation and to facilitate sound transitions and the development of a healthy relationship with the new pastoral leader. The primary expectation is that when the pastoral relationship ends, so does the pastor's participation in any future pastoral service to members of the congregation.

- a) the former pastor is not to worship on a regular basis with their former congregation, and shall abstain from worship with that congregation during the pastoral vacancy or while the congregation is served by an interim pastor;
- b) the former pastor is not to involve themselves in any leadership or advisory role (public or private) in the former congregation.
- c) the former pastor is not to intervene, support, or give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement or dispute.
- d) the former pastor is not to officiate in any special events in the lives of former parishioners or of the congregation, including weddings, funerals, baptisms, worship leadership, church anniversary, activities, etc., unless expressly invited by the Moderator of the Session. If there are dates past the last day of ministry service that these events are scheduled, they should be passed off to the next pastoral leader of the congregation or a designee of the COM.
- e) requests for pastoral services from former parishioners are to be refused, and the pastor, interim pastor, or moderator of the congregation should be informed of the request.
- f) It is not expected that friendships with individuals in the former congregation will be terminated. It is expected that former pastors will refrain from giving opinions or directions regarding church

business that could undermine the transitions necessary for the church and the development of the relationship between the congregation and a new pastoral leader .

- g) if a former pastor plans to visit a congregation by attending worship or a special event the Moderator of that Session should always be consulted and has the right of refusal and consultation with the COM.
- h) if the pastor receives a new call in the same presbytery, it can possibly be difficult to abide by these principles. The former pastor is to exercise diligence to abide by the covenant of closure which has been signed.
- i) the former pastor may return to regular worship with their former congregation only with the concurrence of the new installed pastor. COM may be consulted if that would be helpful.

A Covenant Among the Parties

A Covenant of Closure is to be signed by the departing minister, the Clerk of Session, and representative from the COM in which the above principles are agreed upon. This agreement shall be interpreted to the session and the congregation, included in the minutes of the congregational meeting when the pastoral relationship is dissolved, and noted in the minutes of the COM.



PRESBYTERY OF SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND

COVENANT OF CLOSURE

The Rev. _____, of
the _____ Presbyterian Church, and the Commission
on Ministry (COM) of the Presbytery of Southern New England, having discussed the
intent and requirements of the Presbytery's "Policy for Pastors Who Resign, Retire, or
Complete Temporary Pastorates" enter into the following covenant:

1. I, the Rev. _____, agree to abide by the
principles and covenant above.

2. The Session of the _____
_____ Presbyterian Church agrees to
abide by the principles and covenant above:

a) to respect the terms of the Covenant agreed upon by the Rev.
_____ outlined above; and

b) to interpret the terms of the Covenant to the congregation and to
incorporate this agreement in the minutes of the congregational meeting when the
pastoral relationship is dissolved; and

c) to incorporate this agreement in the Session Minutes.

Signature, Pastor
Signature, Clerk of Session

Signature, COM Representative Date

Approved by COM - 10/12/16
Updated by COM to reflect current bylaws and GA policy 2/21/24

