

Guidelines for Pastoral Courtesy

The ending of a pastoral relationship with a congregation is a tender time for all involved, whether due to retirement, receiving a new call, or other reasons. The Commission on Ministry, in its ongoing work with congregations and pastoral leaders (Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Pastors, and Certified Christian Educators), facilitates the transition to new pastoral leadership.

It is not uncommon for the ending of a pastoral relationship and the establishing of new pastoral leadership within a congregation to have moments of misunderstanding. The *Guidelines for Pastoral Courtesy* seek to avoid misunderstanding.

The most difficult transitions from one pastoral leader to another often focus on pastoral care and major life events. This may include hospital visitation, ongoing pastoral care, baptisms, weddings, and funerals. The *Guidelines for Pastoral Courtesy* affirm the fundamental assumption in both the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Ethical Standards passed by the 210th General Assembly that upon the end of a pastoral relationship there should not be no further pastoral functioning within the congregation where the relationship existed. The new pastoral leader, whether installed or temporary, is the pastoral leader of the congregation and its people and is to provide all pastoral services and care.

FOR FORMER PASTORAL LEADERS: A former pastoral leader shall not return to a former congregation to perform any pastoral function (wedding, funeral, memorial service, baptism, or worship service) without the express prior invitation of the moderator of Session (G-2.0905)

FOR SESSIONS: No former pastoral leader shall be permitted to perform any pastoral services within the facilities of the church without permission being granted and an invitation being issued upon the invitation and permission of the pastor of that congregation. In those cases when there is no pastor, the Session, in consultation with the Commission on Ministry, must invite and grant permission for former pastoral leaders to return and perform any pastoral function.

FOR CURRENT PASTORS: It is the decision of the pastor, along with the session, when appropriate, to invite and grant permission to a former pastoral leader to return to that congregation to perform any pastoral function. When a pastor determines any predecessor is performing pastoral service within their former congregation without the expressed consent of that pastor, then the pastor and/or session should inform the Commission on Ministry.

FOR THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY: The Commission on Ministry shall be sensitive to violations of pastoral courtesy. When such information is brought to the attention of the Commission on Ministry, it shall take appropriate action, beginning with counsel with its own members. If the former pastoral leader is a member of another presbytery, then the Commission on Ministry of that presbytery shall be informed of the concerns and asked to have that pastoral leader honor the *Guidelines for Pastoral Courtesy*. Should failure to achieve

compliance by the former pastoral leader occur, whether a member of Grace Presbytery or of another presbytery, the Commission on Ministry of Grace Presbytery may initiate disciplinary action.

To aid in the understanding of the *Guidelines of Pastoral Courtesy*, a *Covenant of Understanding*, will be signed by the departing pastoral leader and the Session of the congregation. The Commission on Ministry will present and interpret both the *Guidelines* and *Covenant* with pastoral leaders and Sessions.