

Protocol for Pastors Departing Their Congregational Calls

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It is incumbent on the pastor to exit gracefully by giving thanks for the partnership in ministry shared with the congregation and humbly accepting the congregation's expressions of thanks.

Taking "parting shots" while leaving is destructive toward the congregation and harmful to the pastor's reputation.

Note: Ordained pastors and deacons shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the Interim Pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council (S14.14.).

The pastor should make it clear to the congregation that upon leaving, the pastor will no longer perform pastoral acts in the congregation or interfere in any way with the ministry of the new pastor. Should congregation members request pastoral services, the departed pastor should politely decline the request and encourage members to seek those services from the new pastor. If congregation members express concerns about the congregation or the new pastor, the departed pastor should encourage these persons to speak directly to the new pastor.

Pastors whose social lives have been centered in the congregation often find it difficult to turn loose of friendships with congregation members. Bidding farewell means disengaging from the congregation and getting on in life, building new relationships and cultivating relationships outside the parish.

Resigning from the office of pastor of a congregation means ceasing to influence the congregation as pastor. Departing pastors should not offer opinions about or try to influence the appointment of an interim pastor. This is the responsibility of the office of the bishop and the congregation council. Departing pastors should not offer opinions about or try to influence the call process for a new pastor. This is the responsibility of the office of the bishop and the congregation.

If a retiring pastor remains in the community and remains a member of the congregation, an extended absence from the congregation may allow the new pastor to be accepted in the role of pastor. Should the retired pastor be invited to return to participation in the congregation, the retired pastor should defer to the new pastor's wishes regarding any pastoral role in the congregation.