

ENDING OF A PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP POLICY

Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande

The role of clergy in congregations to which they are not (or are no longer) called must be carefully defined to respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations. For congregations in which they do not serve, they shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the rector, vicar or priest in charge, in consultation with the Vestry/Bishop's Committee.

Clergy who have completed their pastoral call to a particular congregation change their role in how they relate to that congregation, and care should be taken to provide for an orderly transition. Certain ministerial functions are specific to and performed on behalf of the congregation, not the individual, and are therefore the responsibility of the clergy called to that congregation. Although to be regarded as affirmations of the clergy's past service to the congregation, requests from members for the former priest to preside at weddings, baptisms, funerals, and the like should be politely refused. Regardless of whether the clergy has accepted a call to another congregation, the ending of pastoral responsibilities must be marked clearly and carefully.

The following guidelines are for clergy and the congregations they served. They are intended to affirm the past ministry of such priests, to give directions that seek to avoid some pitfalls that can present themselves during transitions, and to point to constructive and healthful interactions in the future.

- a. Upon the effective date of the resignation, the priest is no longer a rector or vicar of the congregation, and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in that congregation.
- b. Care must be taken by the clergy to assure that the parochial record of pastoral acts conducted within the congregation is up to date before the departing clergy can be installed in a new call or be granted retired status.
- c. Prior to, but as near to, the effective date of the resignation or retirement as is practicable, the clergy may make use of the rite of the Ending of a Pastoral Relationship during which the priest may return to representatives of the congregation the signs of the ministerial office that were given at the priest's institution.
- d. If invited to exercise a ministerial role by a member of a congregation to which they were formerly called, clergy should indicate that they are not (or are no longer) authorized to take such a role. If invited to exercise such a role by the current clergy, care must be taken to assure that the limited scope of the activity is clear.
- e. As part of the Bishop's pastoral care, especially during times of transition, the bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to discuss these guidelines and their implications either in person or in

correspondence. The Bishop may recommend professional consultation as needed or requested. CREDO also is available for retiring clergy.

Guidelines for Retired and Resigned Clergy

Canonically Resident Clergy

A retired or resigned priest or deacon is on the roster of the Diocese, remains accountable to the bishop, and should annually report to the bishop on any activities as a minister.

Unless otherwise arranged with the Diocesan Office, a retired clergy person must be a member of an Episcopal congregation to remain as Clergy in Good Standing, and remains subject to the standards for ministers of this church.

Congregational Attendance

A retired or resigned clergy person should not remain at the congregation where he or she served at the time of retirement or resignation. Attending another congregation allows the successor priest to assume pastoral leadership more readily. It also provides an opportunity for the retired priest to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the priest's retired role.

Pastoral Service

At the time of retirement, a priest or deacon is no longer pastor of a congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in any congregation previously served unless specifically authorized to do so. Clergy must respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations that they do not serve, as well as the authority of the current priests of such congregations.

The title of Emeritus has no official standing and carries with it no compensation or authorization for service or for other responsibilities.

Interim Ministry

One area of potential service for the retired priest is interim ministry. Many retired priests provide valuable and needed ministry to congregations in time of transition following the resignation of a priest.

A retired priest may serve under contract as an interim during a time of pastoral vacancy only upon appointment by and authorization of the bishop.

Compensation

Retirement benefits provided through Church Pension Fund, combined with Social Security benefits, are intended to provide adequate compensation to priests in retirement. Neither retired priests nor their spouses are entitled to any compensation from any congregation or ministry

previously served solely by reason of being retired or having previously served in that congregation or ministry.

Consultation with Diocesan Bishop

As part of the bishop's pastoral care of retired clergy, the bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to meet with a priest at the time of retirement to discuss these guidelines, the clergy person's new retired status, and its implications.

Transfer from one Diocese to another

The canonical transfer of clergy who are retired may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the diocesan bishops involved.

Form: Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement Between a Resigned Priest and Congregation

Approved by Standing Committee: April 25, 2018