

***Checklist for a Healthy Goodbye***  
**for Pastors, Sessions and Committee on Ministry**  
***including recommended wording of motions and designation of responsibilities***

**Pastor's responsibilities**

- In a timely fashion, the pastor notifies the Committee on Ministry and/or Regional Presbyter of intention to leave current pastoral position, preferably in writing. Ordinarily this process of notification begins approximately two months before the conclusion of the ministry; however in cases of retirement, following a lengthy call, the pastor may begin this discussion twelve to six months prior to departure.  
Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Informs the Session of the intention to dissolve at a specially called meeting of the session, with a COM representative present.  
Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Pastor meets with Session or Personnel Committee to negotiate termination agreement (date, payments, benefits, etc.)  
Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Pastor completes and files appropriate Board of Pensions forms for the dissolution of the relationship ([www.pensions.org](http://www.pensions.org))  
Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

**Session and Congregational Responsibilities**

- Session called and congregation met on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ for the purpose of concurring with the request of the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ to dissolve the pastoral relationship, effective (date) \_\_\_\_\_; the action was forwarded to the Presbytery of Santa Fe to approve the dissolution.  
Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Session meets with Pastor to negotiate termination agreement (date, payments, benefits, etc.)  
Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Congregational meeting to concur in the dissolution of the pastoral relationship is held and a report is submitted to the Committee on Ministry, including any termination agreements, for approval.  
Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

- Session or session appointed committee plans the celebration of the shared ministry on the pastor's last Sunday, including the litany "A Celebration of Pastoral Service" during the last service of worship.

Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

- Clerk of Session and Treasurer completes and files appropriate Board of Pensions forms for the dissolution of the relationship ([www.pensions.org](http://www.pensions.org))

Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

### **Committee on Ministry**

- Upon notification of the pastor's intention and before the session meeting to inform the congregation, COM appoints a liaison to work with the pastor, session and congregation.

Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

- Liaison attends the special meeting of session, any subsequent planning meetings (as requested) and the congregational meeting to concur in the dissolution of the pastoral relationship.

Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

- COM votes to concur with the pastor's request and approves all termination agreements, reports the action to Presbytery and provides for a time of recognition and thanksgiving for ministers who are Honorably Retiring.

Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

- COM conducts exit interview with Session and with Pastor and reviews Ethics for Departing Pastors and Presbytery of Santa Fe Ethical Standards.

Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Suggestions to Pastors Leaving Pastoral Positions***

Consider the following as you make plans to tell your Session and Congregation you are leaving. Please consult with a representative from COM and/or the Regional Presbyter as you formalize your plans.

Where time allows, plan for six weeks between the meeting with session to request the dissolution of the pastoral relationship and the final Sunday. This timeline may assist in your planning:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Date_____ | Notify COM re: intention and set a date for session meeting  |
| Date_____ | Session meeting to call congregational meeting to concur in dissolution; letter prepared for distribution to congregation the following day. |
| Date_____ | Last Sunday  |

In addition to these official steps, consider reading *Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors* by Ed White; plan worship and sermons to address issues of grief, transition and gratitude; consider the groups within the congregation that may be in need of attention; be open to the range of emotions that may be present in the congregation and make note of these during the exit interview with COM.

Attend to the details of your departure: clean your office, inform the Board of Pensions of your termination date, settle any outstanding financial arrangements (discretionary funds accounting, vacation days due, etc.) provide transition for ongoing counseling relationships, cancel or reassign future commitments in community or congregation, review the ethical standards for departing pastor and communicate them clearly with the congregation, and share with a trusted colleague or spiritual friend outside the congregation your feelings surrounding this departure.

## *A Celebration of Pastoral Service*

Session Rep: Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. Children grow up. People commit themselves to one another. Loved ones and friends among us come to the end of their lives. Individuals move into our community and church life. Others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share the time of farewell with friends who are leaving.

Presby Rep: In (date) \_\_\_\_\_, the congregation called the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ to serve as its Pastor (Associate Pastor or Designated Pastor). This week that service comes to an end.

Pastor: I thank all of you members and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church. Your kindness and support, your caring and love have sustained me over these past years, and I shall remember you with deep gratitude.

Presby Rep: Good Christian people, I bid you now pray for the saving presence of our Living Lord. In this world,

People: ***Be present, Lord***

Presby Rep: In this congregation,

People: ***Be present, Lord***

Presby Rep: In this community,

People: ***Be present, Lord***

Presby Rep: In our Presbytery and the whole church,

People: ***Be present, Lord***

Presby Rep: In the homes and hearts of all your people,

People: ***Be present, Lord***

Session Rep: I bid you to pray with me now for the forgiveness of the Lord: For things not finished,

People: ***Forgive us, Lord.***

Session Rep: For expectations not met, for wounds not healed, for gifts not given, for promises not kept.

People: ***Forgive us, Lord.***

Session Rep: I bid you to pray in thanks for our journey together in this place: For friendship made, for joys celebrated and for times of nurture and growth,

People: ***Thanks be to God.***

Session Rep: For wounds healed, expectations met, gifts given and promises kept,

People: ***Thanks be to God.***

Session Rep: For each other, and for God's love which has sustained us.

People: ***Thanks be to God.***

Presby Rep: Do you, the members and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church of \_\_\_\_\_, now release the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ from his/her service as your Pastor (Associate Pastor, Designated Pastor)?

People: ***We do with thanks to God.***

Presby Rep: Do you, \_\_\_\_\_, now recognize and accept the completion of your ministry with this people as their Pastor (Associate Pastor, Designated Pastor)?

Pastor: I do, with thanks to God.

Presby Rep: On behalf of the Presbytery of Santa Fe, I witness to the words spoken here: words of thanksgiving, of forgiveness and release. The Presbytery celebrates with you all that has been found here of life and hope in your journey together as Pastor (Associate Pastor, Designated Pastor) and people and we pledge to you, our brothers and sisters, our continued support and prayers. I declare, with thanks to God for the life and ministry of this congregation and the ministry of its faithful servant \_\_\_\_\_, and with a sense of hope for God's abiding grace in the future, that the pastoral relationship is now dissolved as of (date)\_\_\_\_\_.

Pastor: And now our journeys lead us on in separate ways, yet always bound together with all who call Christ Lord. Go in peace.

People: ***Go in peace.***

All: O God, our endings and beginnings are rooted in your love. You are alpha and omega, both beginning and end. So, whether near or far, we are always held by your love and so are safe from any lasting loss. End this time together with your blessing. Touch all memories with your grace and peace. Help us to live in the new futures you give us with courage and glad hearts. And grant that, in every new time you give us, we may offer you our highest and our best. Together, always, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Alleluia! Amen.

Presby Rep: On behalf of the Presbytery of Santa Fe, I promise this congregation that the Presbytery of Santa Fe through its officers and staff and through the Committee on Ministry will be present and supportive of this congregation in this challenging time of transition.