

**Pastors Ending Well**  
**So you have candidated and accepted a call to a new parish...**  
**...now what?**

**How long before I leave?** The ideal range is 4-6 weeks. This is the amount of time to plan parties, goodbyes, and cover any upcoming events without staying too long. After 6 weeks, the congregation members start treating the pastor as a lame duck and it complicates the grief of saying goodbye. Too soon, the church often shares they feel abandoned.

**Action Items Needed to Complete:**

1. Notify the presbytery office and your COM liaison. We can be of invaluable support- its also vital the church know these people who will be there during the transitions.
2. Start planning your leaving. Remember leaving well is as important as starting well.
3. Tell your congregation . People do this differently - One of the best practices is to do three things all within a few days of each other. You will go into these meetings with facts, last day, how long, your letter already written (and open to adapt to changes as suggested). You also want to be available to them and their feelings (some will be sad, others angry and others afraid).
  1. Call a meeting with the session and share with them your news and plans. Highly encourage them to hold in confidence.
  2. Meet with the staff and tell them; again, ask to hold in confidence.
  3. Send a letter out to your congregation so that everyone else hears at the same time.
  4. Announce in church the first Sunday after telling the others.

It has become an issue of who knows your leaving and when. Some see as favoritism or if they were closer to you, if they knew sooner,. Others feel hurt they were not within your inner circle. It is advised to go in the order above so that none of that becomes an issue.

4. Negotiating time left. Review your vacation time and how you want to spend that- Many pastors will use this as moving time to their next call.

**How to support the church in your leave taking**

1. Get your files in order- go through personnel files, other files, and leave them in good shape. Think about what you would have wanted to have in order when you walked in the door.

**2. Create a resource notebook.** This is a pivotal gift for the next pastor. Interims will also create this if you don't or they can add to it. This is a list of session contacts, directory, local hospitals- addresses, pastoral care concerns, This will be helpful to your session until the next interim arrives. e

**3. Work with the worship team leaders.** This is a key factor as they will be coordinating worship. Depending on how much or how little they have been involved, your work with them during this time will lower the anxiety of transition. You have done all these items without thinking twice about it and supported worship moving smoothly. Remember they are not aware of all the behind the scenes details that are needed to keep track of to accomplish worship.

a) Create a bulletin template for a regular Sunday and for a communion Sunday—a sample one is attached.

b) Create “who does what from where with notes template”. this is very helpful as those who come into the worship service do not know how things operate—as well as time worship starts, if there is AV multimedia needs, “how we do this”. From offering, to prayers of people, to communion each church does these very differently so it supports the guest coming in to know what is the approach of the church

c) Line up a month of pulpit fill- use the pulpit fill list and show your worship leaders how you do this- scheduling, what the fees are, ensuring payment is ready for them, and emails to the pulpit fill with what they need from the visiting preacher. A month provides them enough time to have people in place and get used to the process of creating a worship service.

d) Consider, if you don't have a lay leader, setting one up for each Sunday this serves multiple purposes of having a familiar face up front and support for the guest preacher —you can line these up and train them in the weeks before you go. They can do things such as:

1. Welcome and announcements. It is odd to have a guest preacher welcoming long time members to the church and they are not aware of the events of the church

2. Call to worship
3. Children's time- or if others can do- be mindful our children are taught to be afraid of strangers- its challenging to lead these if you are an unknown
4. Scripture reading
5. Offering invitation and prayer

e) Consider a person assigned to greet the pulpit fill pastor before the service. Show them where restrooms are, where they can robe, get mic'd ask any questions about the service and provide their payment.

4) Pastoral Care notes. Sit with deacons, or elders who will be taking the lead on pastoral care and review any ongoing concerns

### **Other Details**

Exit Interview-COM will sit with you to do an exit interview. This is vital as the next steps for the church begin, your input is invaluable it is also a time to complete. Reflecting on what went well, where are challenges, . You will also be reminded of your separation agreement and asked to sign

Remember to tie up any loose ends. Spend this time saying good goodbyes. Find completions in any unresolved issues, find a way to appreciate those you have spent and bonded with over the last few years. Say good bye to the home bound members-This can be exceptionally powerful, knowing I probably wouldn't see most of them again. Also, remember goodbyes are as much for the church as for you. Your humbleness might want to defer or not make a big deal, and remember their completion with you in celebration supports their next pastor being fully received.