

## Policy and Expectations for Retired Pastors – Adopted March 21, 2020

As a pastor called to serve the church and having discerned that call leading to a new chapter of ministry as a retired pastor of the church, this policy is meant to provide clarity and guidance to make that transition in healthy life-giving ways.

As with any leave-taking, it can be difficult to sever pastoral relationships while maintaining personal relationships and friendships with people that have become very important in your life. It can be most helpful if upon retirement you find a congregation that you can join that is not the congregation/s that you have served. Optimally this would mean transferring your membership and becoming part of a new faith community.

As a retired pastor, you no longer have a pastoral role in a congregation or the community. Therefore you must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in the congregation/s unless specifically authorized to do so by the bishop or invited by the current interim or called pastor. This would include refusing any requests made of you by former congregants, and not including any caveats such as, “If it is alright with your pastor,” which puts the burden of refusing inappropriately on the new pastor or the interim pastor.

Friendships that have developed through a pastoral relationship may continue into retirement. It needs to be noted that the original basis for this relationship no longer exists and the retired pastor finds themselves in a unique and difficult position of not being able to express an opinion concerning what is happening in the congregation, congregational events, or the current pastor. When the relationship is based upon the activities of the congregation this can be especially difficult.

Because you have discerned God’s call into the role of retired pastor, know that the dynamics of relationships forged when you were a called pastor change immensely. In the midst of transitioning from the daily rhythms of congregational life to the rhythms of retired life, there are many decisions to be made and adjusted to, friendships to be attended to in appropriate ways, and ministry to be celebrated. As a part of this process please see the attached *Covenant for Retired Pastors* to be used as a reminder to the retiring pastor, congregational leadership, and the congregation of the expectations for the future in order for all parties to transition in a healthy, helpful manner into the new ministry that God has in store for all.

While not called to a congregation in retirement, you remain a pastor of the church, as such your call to ministry may continue in new ways. As time, energy and desire permit, consider the opportunities to serve the larger church in the community, at the synod level and beyond. There is work to be done and your continued involvement in the wider ministry of the church and efforts where needed would be deeply appreciated.

## **Covenant for Retired Pastors**



As Christians, we all are baptized into the priesthood of Christ to offer ourselves to the Lord of the Church in thanksgiving for what he has done and continues to do for us. It has been my privilege to support the mission and ministry of the Church as pastor. Understanding that though I am no longer serving as a pastor, my voice and my opinion may be more influential than a lay person within the body of Christ. Therefore, I commit to the following:

- to pray for the ongoing mission of the congregation and for their pastoral candidate, or their new pastor;
- to respect the terms of this Covenant
- to not be involved in any leadership or advisory role (public or private) in this congregation without the pastor or the bishop's permission and to refrain from behaviors that seek in any way to shape or control the transition process, including any attempt to influence the call process or interject opinions into matters appropriate to the pastoral office;
- to refrain from language or behavior that could undermine the development of the relationship between the congregation and a pastoral candidate or a new pastor (temporary or successor);
- to not support or give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement;
- to refuse requests for pastoral services made by members of the congregation, including baptisms, weddings, funerals, anniversaries, visiting the sick and homebound, etc., except as invited by the current interim or called pastor, and to consult with the current pastor regarding attendance at worship, special events, or congregational meetings;
- to transfer my membership and that of my spouse to another congregation upon my departure if that is deemed most appropriate; and to encourage my family members to support me in maintaining this Covenant and to support the ministry of the congregation's new pastor.

*(Other items may be added that are consistent with the particular relationship and mission of this congregation.)*

It is understood that this Covenant does not affect or require termination of friendships with individuals who are members of this congregation.

Signature of Retired Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed by Interim Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Council President \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Describe how shared with congregation, including dates: \_\_\_\_\_

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