



When the Installed Pastor leaves

Steps for Dissolution of the Pastoral Relationship when the pastor is leaving to take another call:

- The Pastor decides to end the relationship to take another call
- The Pastor contacts the COM Liaison, COM Moderators or Presbytery Leader
 - *This doesn't always happen before the pastor informs the session, but it would be great if it did so that the COM could assist with those early stages of the process.*
- Pastor notifies Session, requesting that a Congregational Meeting may be called for the purpose of acting on the request to end the pastoral relationship.
 - *It is helpful for the COM liaison to **be present at the Session meeting** where the pastor announces and requests the congregational meeting because depending on how long since the last time the church went through this process there could be a lot of questions. It is better to answer them early in the process.*
- The Session determines the date and procedure by which the pastor's resignation is communicated to the congregation. Ordinarily this announcement includes the pastor's notice of accepting a new call and the call for the congregational meeting. This can be done by a letter mailed or emailed and an announcement at the next worship service.
 - *Some suggestions on communicating: send a letter or email a letter before making other announcements on Facebook or Twitter. It is much more personal to receive a letter than to see it blasted out to the world. The communication should be ready to go at the session meeting. It is hard to ask session members to keep that quiet while a letter is being composed, produced and sent.*
- The COM liaison works with the Session and the Pastor to
 - suggest appropriate transitional celebrations,
 - conduct an exit interview with the Session,

- explain separation ethics,
- describe transitional ministry tasks (interim pastor, moderator for session) and answer questions session may have on the next steps.
 - *These items may be discussed at the first meeting with the COM but usually a second meeting is needed to go over the details.*
- It is appropriate and helpful for a COM representative to be present at both the Session meeting and the meeting of the congregation. Ordinarily, the pastor moderates the congregation's meeting.
 - *The pastor may ask the COM liaison to moderate or another pastor. This should be worked out between the pastor and the COM prior to the day of the meeting.*
- When congregational action on the pastor's request to dissolve the relationship is taken, **the request is forwarded by the Clerk of Session** to the COM for approval.
- The Session shall take responsibility for creating the Dissolution Agreement.
 - *The COM liaison will work with the pastor and session to develop this agreement. Ordinarily this would be completed before the congregational meeting.*
- The Pastor is expected to continue in active ministry with the congregation for at least four weeks. Including four Sundays, after the date of the announcement of the resignation to the congregation.
 - *Should for some reason this is not possible, the pastor should contact the COM immediately.*
- The Session may call a special meeting to confer with the pastor and representatives of the Committee on Ministry, prior to the meeting of the congregation. At this meeting the session should make all decisions concerning vacation pay and time; study leave allowances and time, and Board of Pension benefits contributions with the pastor, if any. The Session approves the Dissolution Agreement and recommends it to the congregation for action.
- The Session is responsible for planning the appropriate event or events to celebrate and appreciate the pastor's ministry and encourage opportunities for members of the congregation to celebrate and appreciate the pastor's ministry.

- **The pastor should not make any arrangements for worship** and ministry within the congregation for after the pastor's last day of active service. The session will be responsible for worship leaders after the Pastor's last day of service. The COM liaison may have some suggestions and the pulpit supply list is on our website.
- The congregation votes on the dissolution of the call and the written dissolution agreement. This meeting of the congregation is to be moderated by a member of Presbytery appointed by COM. The Clerk of session forwards the information from the congregational meeting to the COM as soon as possible. **The Pastor's membership cannot be transferred until all paperwork/documents are received by the presbytery.**
- COM conducts an exit interview with the pastor. This may happen before the pastor leaves or after by video or phone conference.
- COM conducts an exit interview with the session. This will be set up for a time after the pastor leaves.
- COM approves the dissolution and the written dissolution agreement. The agreement is not effective until the COM has voted to approve the agreement. The agreement will be reported to the Presbytery of The Highlands at the next stated meeting of the Presbytery. The appropriate "paperwork" will be done to transfer the pastor.