

Presbytery of Philadelphia
Commission on Ministry
Covenant of Closure (Covenant)
With an Outgoing Pastor

The Rev. _____, the _____ Church, and the Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, having discussed the intent and requirements of the Presbytery's policies regarding pastors who are leaving service in a congregation, enter into the following covenant:

1. The Rev. _____ agrees:

- a) Not to worship with the congregation. The purpose of this is to allow the interim and any installed pastors the opportunity to become accepted fully as the congregation's leader(s) with as few difficulties as possible. Exceptions to this, in a case of crisis, should be dealt with by the moderator, session and Commission on Ministry.
- b) To refrain from giving opinions or directions regarding church business that could undermine the transitions necessary for the church and the development of the relationship between the congregation and a new pastor.
- c) Not to accept an invitation to fill any functions he/she performed during his/her tenure as pastor of that church, nor indicate a willingness to do so, unless the invitation has first come from the interim or new installed pastor and not from a congregation or its members.

COM's interpretation of this is that if a member of the congregation approaches the former pastor and asks if he/she will officiate at a special event that the former pastor shall decline the request and refer that member to the current pastor of the congregation. The former pastor shall not give any indication to the member that he/she would be glad to officiate if only the current pastor would invite him/her. That would be contrary to the spirit of this covenant and would not contribute to the health of the congregation and its relationship to the current pastor.

- d) Not involve himself/herself in any leadership or advisory role (public or private) concerning any of his/her successor(s). This includes refraining from suggesting names to nominating committees or commenting on potential candidates.
- e) Not to intervene, support or give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement or dispute. It is important to practice due diligence in not breaking the boundaries set by COM and the interim or newly installed pastor.
- f) To be judicious in his/her continued use of social media with members of the community that he/she served ie. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, Tumblr, Four Square, Linked In etc.

Please note that there are no time limits to this covenant and the terms do not expire after a certain period of time has passed. *It is important that the former pastor/s practice due diligence in not breaking the boundaries set by COM and the interim pastor.* It is understood that this policy does not affect or require termination of friendships with individuals in the congregation, but these friendships must be continued in the spirit of the above agreement.

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2. The responsibilities of the Session, on behalf of the congregation, are as follows:

Respect the terms of the Covenant as outlined above.

- a) Interpret to the congregation the terms of the Covenant. Many members will not understand the change in relationship that occurs when a person ceases to be the pastor of the congregation. This may be true particularly when a former pastor is elected to be a Pastor Emeritus(a). The congregation mistakenly may have the understanding that a Pastor Emeritus(a) is exempted from the terms of this Covenant. He/she is not exempted in any way.
- b) Instruct the congregation not to involve itself in the continuing ministry of the former pastor.
- c) Incorporate any written agreement in the Session Minutes.

3. The Presbytery of Philadelphia's Commission on Ministry shall:

- a) Interpret the Covenant and its purpose to the pastor and to the Session
- b) Be the Presbytery's agent in reminding all parties of the principles of the Covenant
- c) Assist any pastor or Session having difficulty understanding or adapting to this change of relationship
- d) Enforce compliance of the Covenant when a breach occurs

Outgoing Pastor

Date

Clerk of Session

Date

COM Moderator

Date

Please return form to:
Presbytery of Philadelphia
Attn: Commission on Ministry
915 E Gowen Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19150