

Approved May 5, 2014

Pittsburgh Presbytery
Policy Regarding Former Pastors

The Commission on Ministry has found that healthy relationships between new pastors (Installed and Temporary) and their congregations develop best when former pastors are attentive to maintaining appropriate boundaries with the congregation. The *Book of Order* states, "After the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide their pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of session" (G-2.0905). When former pastors receive requests for pastoral services by former parishioners, they should refer all such requests to the current pastor.

Former pastors should offer neither solicited nor unsolicited pastoral counsel to their former congregants. If they become concerned about developments in their former congregation, they should communicate such concerns only to the presbytery ministerial staff, and not to the church's session or members.

Healthy relationships between congregations and former pastors may include the following forms of contact:

- Pastoral
 - Occasional consultation to maintain institutional memory and goodwill
 - Collegiality between former and successor pastors
- Congregational. At the invitation of the new pastor.
 - Occasional attendance at services and special events, such as dedications and anniversaries
 - Sharing bereavement, by attending funeral services
 - Occasional assistance in ministry
- Social
 - Maintenance of personal friendship with a few members, provided there is a clear understanding that the relationship is social and not pastoral

By signing here, the departing pastor and the clerk of session (or other appropriate congregational representative) pledge that they will abide by this policy in their future relationships.

Departing Pastor

Date

Clerk of Session

Date

COM representative

Date

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Strategy for communicating this Policy:

1. At the COM exit interview, the COM liaison and/or presbytery staff minister shall discuss this policy with the departing pastor.
2. At the session meeting when the pastor announces his/her departure, the COM liaison or presbytery staff minister will provide copies of this policy to the session and explain its importance. The pastor and session will be asked to affirm their willingness to abide by it.
3. In the pastoral letter to the congregation announcing the pastor's departure, the pastor shall affirm his/her commitment to abide by this policy. The COM has prepared a sample letter for this purpose, which is available on request.