

Dear Former Pastor of a Congregation in National Capital Presbytery,

The transition from one pastor to another should be a time of celebration, when the congregation's past witness is affirmed and its future calling is anticipated. We all know in our hearts and minds that our former congregation must say goodbye, really goodbye, if it is fully to welcome and embrace the new. As its departing pastor, you also recognize that you must say goodbye and really mean it for your new witness to Christ, whatever it is to be, is to become fully manifest. Friendships and mutual affection with members of that congregation can and should continue and flourish, but the pastoral relationship has been, and needs to be, severed. We all know from experience that a new pastoral relationship takes firm root only when a new pastor preaches, teaches, prays, marries, buries and baptizes. If you in any way continue to perform those fundamental pastoral roles, you intentionally or unintentionally stand in the way of the deepening attachment of new pastor and new flock. It is simply reality that the former pastor assumes the lion's share of responsibility to ensure a clean break of pastoral responsibilities is affected.

One critical responsibility for a former pastor and the ruling elders is leading the congregation in a positive and appropriate detachment from the former pastor's pastoral role. The enclosed "Former Pastor Policy and Covenant of Closure" produced by the Committee on Ministry (COM) of the National Capital Presbytery directs and guides the former pastor and Session as they ensure that detachment. Please read it, attend to it and note that the Covenant of Closure has been signed by you as the departing pastor, the Clerk of Session and a representative of COM. There really is no way to avoid this commitment.

If at any time you are confused regarding the appropriate boundaries, you may contact the General Presbyter or the chair of the Committee on Ministry who will counsel you.

Grace and Peace,

Committee on Ministry Chair

General Presbyter

Stated Clerk