

Leaving your Current Appointment



Introduction:

Appointments by their nature are time limited. Clergy come into a community usually for 5 to 10 years and leave, but lay members in the community remain. It is therefore extremely important how clergy take their leave of an appointment for the good of the parish community. It is also important for future clerics who will be assigned to the parish.

The following are best practices, except where specifically identified.

When Leaving your Current Appointment:

- Contact your Bishop to discuss a possible change in appointments.
- Inform the Bishop in writing of your resignation, after you have received a new appointment or made the decision to retire or resign from your current appointment.
- After you have received written acceptance of your resignation from the Bishop (Canon 10 section 7) notify the churchwardens.
- If retiring please refer to, “Pre-Retirement Checklist.”
With the churchwardens, make an announcement to the congregation that you are ending your pastoral relationship and expressing your gratitude for your mutual ministry.
- Plan a liturgical ending of your pastoral relationship within the context of worship.
- Plan an ending with parish organizations and staff.

Communicating Your Decision

- Assist the churchwardens with writing a letter to the congregation that outlines your plan for leaving and assures them that they will have support and guidance from the staff and the Bishop through the transition.
- Let the congregation know, in writing, that,
 - You value their friendship.
 - After you leave, you will no longer be able to function as their priest; *
 - It no longer will be your role to officiate or preach at their baptisms, weddings, and funerals;*
 - You will come back only at the invitation of your successor; and then,*
 - You will attend only as their former incumbent. *

*See [Liturgical Standards and Resources for Clergy](#), 5.10 Return of Former Incumbents.

- Notify local ecumenical groups, clergy associations and funeral homes that you are leaving and resign from positions you hold in community organizations.

Preparing To Go

- List all your current responsibilities, assigning a hand-off date, and designating a specific person to take up that task.
- With the churchwardens, review all leadership positions, clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Update job descriptions for paid staff.
- Be clear about any commitments (baptisms, weddings, funerals) you have scheduled for immediately after your leave taking date.
- Ensure all Screening in Faith requirements are met.
- If there are staffing practices in place (i.e. leaves, vacation, benefits, sick days) ensure that they are in written form for your successor.

Organizing For Your Successor

- Review with the churchwardens their leadership responsibilities for property, finance, and administration during the transition.
- Identify those in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and home bound, noting who expects to be visited and with what regularity. Ensure all contact information is up-to-date.
- Note preplanned funeral arrangements and where the information is filed.
- If there is a history of conflict, document and leave for the incoming cleric.
- Prepare a calendar for the upcoming year, including Episcopal visitations, patronal feasts, any special services, stewardship, and annual meeting.
- Leave clear instructions about your congregation's participation in community or ecumenical services, as well as their expectations about preaching and hosting future events.
- Prepare a current membership list and the most recent pictorial directory if one exists.
- Prepare a list of current Advisory Board or Parish Council membership list with notation of each individual position in the parish and the reason for being on the board or council.
- Prepare a list of parish ministries and active committees including contact persons and phone numbers.
- Prepare an account of any discretionary funds available – location and how to access them.
- Prepare a file of service leaflets for the past three years.
- Prepare a file of lay reader certificates, lists of current altar guild members, ushers, acolytes, and servers with contact information (phone numbers and e-mail addresses).
- Describe unique parish customs for the conduct of worship especially weddings and funerals.
- Prepare a file of current agreements and contact information for all groups that use the buildings. Ensure that all licenses and leases are up-to-date.
- Note the location of home communion set, chrism, last year's palms, the nativity set, etc.

- Prepare a list of electronic passwords and website information.
- Turn in your keys, clearly tagged.
- Establish a date certain for moving out of church provided housing and agree on conditions of repair and cleanliness.
- Let people say good bye, thank you, and give you their blessing.
- Don't leave anything for the next priest. If it needs to be done, do it. Too many arriving clergy are sunk by things left undone.

Relating After You Leave

- After your last day, do not return to the office to check for mail, e-mail, or phone messages.
- In all cases, the responsibility belongs to clergy leaving to make clear that the pastoral relationship has ended.
- Never be involved with the search process including giving names or offering opinions about candidates.
- Avoid getting triangulated with members of the congregation and your successor.
- Be clear that it is not appropriate for you to discuss any parish business after you leave.
- Make plans to worship with another congregation if not moving on to a new clerical appointment.
- Remember, you have no official or canonical role in the parish you leave and your priestly, pastoral, and administrative functions end on the effective date of your retirement or resignation.
- The parishioner's primary pastor is always their incumbent. Be clear with past parishioners about your relationship with them. Even if you consider past parishioners to be friends they are not your parishioners nor under your pastoral care. You are not their pastor nor their personal chaplain in retirement. Always show your loyalty to the current incumbent or priest-in-charge.