



## Ethical Agreement for Congregations Relating to Former Pastors:

Congregations and pastors need to understand the professional ethics of ministry relating to former pastors, interim pastors, and current pastors. A pastor who resigns or retires from a congregation ministry setting no longer serves as pastor to members of the congregation. Former pastors should not agree to pastoral responsibilities that rightfully belong to the current pastor of the congregation. Additionally, congregation members should not ask a former pastor to perform such duties.

**The PURPOSE of this document is to clearly state the proper boundaries for former pastors, interim pastors, current pastors, and members of congregations relative to ongoing pastoral responsibilities and duties.**

When a pastor accepts a call to a congregation, a sacred covenant is established between the pastor and the people of God in that place. For ministry to be strong and effective, the covenant needs to be strengthened and nurtured until God calls that pastor to another sector of ministry. When a pastor resigns a call, the covenant ends.

Upon resignation from the call, retirement or on-leave-from-call status, the pastor must no longer continue attending the former congregation nor must they remain a member of the former congregation. It is important that they sever ties with the former congregation. Additionally, membership must be sought at another ELCA congregation. It is imperative that former congregation members understand and respect this covenant.

### **MEMBERS and FRIENDS OF THE CONGREGATION:**

Members should avoid placing both the current and former pastor(s) in awkward positions by seeking the pastoral services of a former pastor. Members should simply not ask for such favors from former pastors. By showing high regard to the current pastor, both in person and on social media, members affirm the significance of the pastoral office which was once held by the former pastor.

It is very natural that members turn to a former pastor who baptized their other children or performed weddings and funerals for family members while serving as their pastor. The former pastor should graciously decline and direct the family to their current pastor. As with other family friends, the former pastor might attend the service as a guest.

Prior to, but as near to, the effective date of resignation as practical, the congregation may make use of the rite of "FAREWELL and GODSPEED" during which the pastor may return to representatives of the congregation the signs of the ministerial office that were given at the pastor's installation.

**Please copy and distribute to congregation members.**

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Congregation President

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Departing Pastor

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Date

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Date