

YOU SAY GOODBYE

ROLE OF THE CHURCH/LAITY:

Saying goodbye in appropriate ways is essential for healthy closure. These guidelines are merely suggestive. You are encouraged to be sensitive, creative and generous in saying goodbye.

1. **Chair of Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee:**

The chair of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee is the primary lay person responsible for ensuring a healthy farewell for the pastor/family.

2. **Lay Leader and other officers:**

The chair of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee will consult with the committee and work with the Lay Leader, Trustees, Parsonage Committee and others to plan for a smooth transition.

3. **Ways to be supportive:**

The chair of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee is encouraged to stay in close contact with the pastor, finding ways to be supportive. The pastor is the one who will feel the most stress and pressure in the move. It is good to remember that:

- a. Every pastor/family touches certain individuals in very special ways. There are always those who grieve when “their” pastor moves.
- b. Pastors/families also grieve knowing they are leaving loved ones behind.
- c. The Staff/Parish Relations Committee is responsible to make sure the congregation and pastor are given an opportunity to say goodbye in a meaningful, concrete way. This event should not be held the night before a pastor moves. Your pastor needs packing and cleaning time. Consult with the pastor to schedule the time. In some churches, the United Methodist Women or some other group sponsors this moving event. The committee should make sure some group takes the lead when such an event (i.e. a reception or fellowship meal) is held.
- d. The Staff/Parish Relations Committee is the group to think through and communicate with other church leaders concerning ways in which to express appreciation for the pastor/family. If there are children in the pastor’s family, you may want to consider ways in which they can be affirmed. Being the “preacher’s kid” is not always easy.
- e. Be conscious of some members feeling betrayed or hurt by the pastor’s moving. At times people pull away from the pastor to avoid dealing with the pain of separation.
- f. Pray for wisdom to model for others in the congregation ways to face grief/anger and dealing with these emotions in a healthy way.
- g. Be sure to celebrate some of the high moments of your life together as a congregation with the pastor. Hopefully, there will be times for joyful remembrances and laughter as well as tears.

4. **Lame Duck:**

Please remember that your present pastor is still your pastor until moving day. Do your part in avoiding the problem of the weeks before moving day becoming “lame duck” days.

5. **Parsonage Review:**

It is often painful for the parsonage family to have people from the church going through the parsonage at different times. (If there is no Parsonage Committee organized, then the chair of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee along with the chair of the Trustees is responsible.) You are encouraged to do this with sensitivity but also with honesty. If repairs are needed, work out a schedule with the pastor. Try to avoid having members coming in and out of the parsonage as volunteer repair persons. This requires enormous sensitivity; you do not wish to add to the stress of the moving pastor/family, nor do you wish to have a parsonage incomplete for the new pastor/family.

6. Finances:

The chair of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee needs to work with the pastor and Finance Committee to ensure at least 1/2 of all Apportionments, Pensions and Salaries are paid up-to-date (through June.) Failure to do so could reflect negatively on the pastor and congregation.

7. Goodbye means Goodbye:

Remember that saying goodbye includes an understanding that when the pastor leaves, he/she does not return for pastoral duties. You will have a new pastor for those ministries. Both pastor and laity are encouraged to follow this very important protocol. 84% of Texas Annual Conference clergy responding to a survey support the adoption of the following statement: "Upon leaving an appointment, including retirement, pastors must discontinue pastoral relationships with the parish, recognizing that all future weddings, baptisms, counseling, visitations, and funerals should be fulfilled by the successor pastor, unless an unusual situation exists and is approved by the successor pastor." Too often a new ministry is handicapped by this problem.

***Celebrate the joys,
forgive the mistakes and
bid farewell with grace!***



ON SAYING GOODBYE

A CHECKLIST FOR CONGREGATIONS

The following items include actions that should be completed or items that should be prepared for the incoming pastor to facilitate a smooth transition. Work in cooperation with your current pastor to spread out the administrative work and to ensure everything is current and in order for the incoming pastor.

Membership and Other Records

- Be sure the membership roll is current and up-to-date
- Provide a list of all changes to the roll since the last charge conference
- Provide pertinent files: Charge Conference, Annual Report forms, etc.

Pastoral Care

- Provide a list of those needing pastoral care due to serious illness, recent deaths, etc.
- Provide a list of the area hospitals and nursing homes with their phone numbers and information about how to obtain clergy identification, if needed
- Provide a list of local counseling services for referral
- Provide a list of members in college or in the military; include addresses and notes
- Provide a list of members in seminary and current candidates for licensed and ordained ministry

Personnel/Church Leadership/Volunteers

- Provide the names and positions of persons employed by the church
- Provide a list of who is responsible for the bulletin, newsletter, etc.
- Provide a list of the Administrative Board/Council members
- Provide a list of Sunday school teachers, youth leaders/workers, etc.
- Provide a list of individuals available for pulpit supply

Policies

- Leave a copy of all church policies – for child safety, Safe Sanctuary, building use, weddings, funerals, personnel, etc.
- Leave information in reference to any ongoing arrangements with individuals or groups (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc.)

Church Schedule

- Provide a meeting schedule (Board/Council, Committees, UMM, UMW, UMYF, etc.)
- Provide dates for events scheduled by the church, including annual events such as Christmas, Bazaar, Soup Kitchen, Mother-Daughter dinners, etc.
- Provide information pertaining to pending legal matters – wills, possible liability situations
- Provide a list of continuing ecumenical experiences, such as a community Thanksgiving service with local churches rotating the host church

The Church Building

- Leave a set of keys, well-identified
- Provide name(s) and phone numbers of those who open/close the building(s)
- Put together a file of any warranties, maintenance contracts, and manuals on all office equipment, heating/cooling systems, etc.
- Be sure the pastor's office is cleaned thoroughly and in good repair. If the office will be painted or new furniture will be purchased, include the new pastor in these decisions
- Leave a list of any maintenance items requiring attention or a schedule of things on the docket

Parsonage Administration

- Leave a set of keys, well-identified
- Put together a file of all appliance manuals and warranties (refrigerator, dishwasher, washer, dryer, heating/air conditioning unit, etc.)
- Identify switches or fuse box circuits
- Schedule a parsonage visit about a month before the move. Make a list of repairs and improvements that need to occur immediately as well as those that need less urgent attention. If any painting, wallpapering, or carpeting is planned, consult the incoming pastor regarding choices. Remember the parsonage will be the pastor's home. Including him or her in decisions will help in making a positive transition.
- Have all utilities, including phone, gas, electric, water, and cable, put in the church's name so the incoming pastor does not have to provide security deposits and transfer utilities – which would be an additional expense to the church.
- Be sure the church office has the departing pastor's new address and phone number in the event any mail needs to be forwarded.