

A COVENANT OF CLOSURE

D. 1001--Introduction and Policy

The act of a pastor leaving service with a congregation means that the pastor must completely sever the pastoral relationship with that congregation. This does not mean that the ties of love and friendship must be broken. However, a departing pastor is ethically responsible to strengthen the ties between the new pastor and members of the congregation.

*From New Castle Presbytery's Policy Concerning Departing Pastors
and Their Former Parishioners*

New Castle Presbytery Manual, Appendix D

Having read the New Castle Presbytery Policy Concerning Departing Pastors and Their Former Parishioners (Presbytery Manual, Appendix D), we agree to the following mutual covenant:

The Departing Pastor

For the spiritual well-being of the congregation I have served, I understand that, while personal friendships may continue, my pastoral role and relationships with parishioners must end. I will, therefore:

Refrain from any pastoral role or activity in the life of my former congregation: worship leadership/preaching, celebrating sacraments of Baptism or Lord's Supper, officiating at weddings or funerals, or engaging in any form of pastoral care for former parishioners.

Refrain from inserting myself or responding to requests for opinion or guidance, as my former congregation works through the transitions necessary for their continued ministry, and develops a pastoral relationship with their new pastor.

Encourage the congregation to do the work needed to move forward in their life together, and assure them of my hope and prayers for them.

(Pastor's signature)

(Date)

The Session

For the spiritual well-being of the congregation we continue to serve, we understand that we have the responsibility to lead our congregation through this pastoral transition.

We will, therefore:

Respect the terms of this covenant and the Presbytery Policy, and model for one another and for the congregation the boundaries contained therein, refraining from any pastoral/professional expectation of our former pastor.

Interpret clearly to the congregation the terms of this covenant, and the reasons for it. We will include this covenant in our Session minutes, and will inform the congregation of it in writing in whatever forms are fitting.

Apply ourselves to tending to matters of transition, mindful of the impact of change and loss upon the congregation we serve, and yet still prayerfully open to the Spirit's leading for our congregation's next chapter, and next pastor.

(Clerk of Session)

(Name of Congregation)

(Date)

The Committee on Ministry of New Castle Presbytery

For the spiritual well-being of both pastor and congregation, the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry will:

Review and interpret the Presbytery's Policy and this covenant with both the departing pastor and the Session.

Record the covenant's signing in the minutes of the Committee on Ministry, and, should it become necessary, act as the Presbytery's agent in addressing any ongoing concerns regarding it.

Prayerfully support the Session and congregation in the process of transition, and provide a liaison to offer guidance through the congregation's Mission Study and pastoral search processes.

(Chair, Committee on Ministry)

(Date)