

When a Pastor or Rostered Leader Resigns or Retires

When a pastor or rostered leader resigns or retires, it can be a stressful and anxious time for the faith community. While it may be an exciting time for the pastor, there can be surprise, confusion, sadness, and even anger for members of the congregation upon hearing the news that their pastor is leaving. The following steps are designed to help both the pastor and the congregation move through this process successfully and experience closure. Many of the following steps also apply if the rostered leader is an associate in ministry or diaconal minister.

1. The first step for the pastor is to inform the synod office of their upcoming retirement or resignation from a call.
2. The pastor is to then submit a letter of resignation to both the synod office AND the congregation's council and inform the congregation. The letter of resignation should include the ending date of the call. As a rule, it is recommended that the pastor's last day be approximately 30 days after submitting the letter of resignation. While it is important to have time to say "goodbye" and have closure, it can be difficult on everyone to prolong this process beyond 30 days.
3. The congregation is to then contact Portico to provide end-of-call information. This can be done in one of two ways:
 - Report end-of-call information online using the congregation's Portico Employer Link (you will need your Portico Employer ID)
 - Call Portico Customer Service at 800-352-2876

If the pastor is NOT accepting another call immediately, they are to contact Portico to make arrangements for ongoing healthcare coverage AND request "on leave from call" status from the synod council. (The form can be requested from the synod office.)

4. A representative from the Synod is to meet with the pastor and the congregation's council to:
 - Do an exit interview with the pastor;
 - Encourage the congregation to conduct an exit interview with the pastor;
 - Review a copy of *Pastoral Ethics: Pastors Relating to Previously Served Parishes* or *Pastoral Ethics: For Pastors Retiring to a Community Where They Have Served* (provided by synod);
 - Review: *Certification of Completion of Financial Obligations, Certification of Church Records, Guidelines for Congregations and Departing Pastors, or Guidelines for Congregation and Retiring Pastor*. *These forms must be signed and returned to the synod office before the pastor leaves;*
 - Talk about the needs of the congregation for interim ministry;
 - Celebrate a *Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call*, which can be done with a representative of the synod office and/or congregational leadership during a worship service or congregational celebration.
5. The congregation may want to plan a farewell celebration for the pastor.



6. The congregation's council is to work with the synod office to arrange transitional ministry support as follows:
 - The congregation's council is to arrange for pulpit supply and pastoral care coverage until an interim pastor can begin (this often will take 6-8 weeks);
 - The synod office will assist in identifying an interim process that best fits the congregational needs and capacity.
 - a. identify a potential interim pastor;
 - b. identify an interim consultant and bridge pastor;
 - c. other process as needed.
 - The council is to interview any potential interim leadership to determine the purpose, duties, mutual expectations, and compensation for the interim ministry;
 - The council president, council secretary, interim pastor, and bishop or bishop's representative are to sign a Covenant Agreement.