



The Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina

Guidelines for Clergy Leave-taking

A good beginning depends on a good ending. Your church's ability to call your successor depends on how well you leave and on your ability to let go. Your character, integrity and love for God's people are demonstrated in how you leave the position.

First Steps When You know You're Leaving

1. Inform the Bishop in writing you are leaving. It is preferable that you do this well in advance of the date of your last service, as the Bishop might want to discuss the timing of this with you. Typically, the Bishop advises that you leave 6-8 weeks after giving notice to the vestry. Following notification to the Bishop, schedule a time to meet with the Canon to the Ordinary to review next steps.
2. Schedule an exit interview with the Bishop's office.
3. Review your Letter of Agreement regarding accrued vacation time and be prepared to host a conversation with your wardens.
4. After notifying the Vestry of your decision, inform the Wardens that the canons require the wardens to notify the Bishop in writing that the parish will be without a priest. This can be done by email. They will also want to schedule a time to speak with the Canon to the Ordinary to discuss next steps.
5. If you are retiring, notify the Church Pension Fund, securing the proper forms. The bishop's signed approval is required for retirement.
6. Schedule a ritual ending of your pastoral relationship within the context of worship. (Refer to the book of Occasional services for suggestions. In planning this service.)

Helpful Guidelines and Expectations in Leave-taking

1. It is expected that the resigning priest will worship at another Episcopal Church, or a different congregation of their choice during the interim period and the first 12 months of his or her successor's ministry. If the resigning priest wishes to attend the former parish at the end of this period, the priest should contact the new rector about next steps.
2. For those resigning priests who remain geographically proximate to their former cures, it is absolutely not permissible to exercise pastoral visits and hospital care that are in the normal purview of the incumbent.
3. Pastoral matters which may suddenly arise that may be an exception to this norm will be at the invitation of the incumbent, senior warden or junior warden after consultation with the bishop.
4. Best practices indicate that the congregation is able to move forward with their life when the spouse of the resigning priest also lives into these expectations.
5. It is never appropriate for the resigning priest to discuss any parish business with any present vestry member or other lay leader. It is always appropriate to answer the incumbent clergy's questions about any historical parish business that is relevant to a present decision.
6. It is never appropriate to engage in evaluative conversations about one's successor. If you have concerns about pastoral care or emotional safety of any person in your former cure, you should communicate those concerns directly to one of the bishops or the canon of the ordinary.