

## **GUIDELINES FOR PASTORAL TRANSITIONS**

Pastoral transitions are an incredible time for a variety of emotions and feelings. Through this time a pastor in transition should work to maintain integrity and dignity in the office of pastor. It is natural for a pastor to develop deep care and love for their flock. Often times mutual friendships are fostered with persons in one's charge during their tenure of service. These friendships are a blessing and often last beyond one's tenure as their "pastor". In respect for all persons and for the general welfare of the church, the following considerations will be followed.

### **The Church:**

- Should be sensitive that pastoral transition can be a challenging time for pastors.
- Should honor your former leader; he/she was God's servant and your friend in Christ.
- Should embrace your future / current leader as God's person for a new day.
- Should remember that we are all called to serve God and be led by His shepherd whom He calls to us.

### **The former/outgoing pastor:**

- Will be absent from the church for a period of no less than 2 years after the arrival of the new pastor, except as freely invited by the new pastor. Should an invitation be given, it is to be done in such a manner so as not to upset congregants. Such invitations are not to be expected. In general, this will apply to both the former pastor and his/her family members.
- Will do all possible to honor and respect the new incoming pastor, as he/she would want honored.
- Will realize that he/she no longer possesses the right to give pastoral care, and will freely release that privilege to the new pastor.
- Will refuse any interaction perceived as pastoral care or authority with former congregants.
- Will restrict hospital visits to a friendly call during regular visiting hours.
- Will not call on shut-ins or make home visits without the foreknowledge and consent of the new pastor.
- Will not engage in conversation detrimental toward the new pastor.
- Will not say or do anything that will undermine the ministry and authority of the new pastor.
- Will avoid persuading things be done his/her way or as when he/she was the pastor.
- Will inform the new/incoming pastor of anyone he/she will have regular social interaction with, so that his/her actions would not be misunderstood.

### **The new/incoming pastor:**

- Generally, a new pastor is greeted with a sense of excitement by the church to which he/she has been called. However, the new pastor shall be sensitively aware of his/her predecessor's ministry and relationships.
- Shall respect the fact that the former pastor may have continuing long-term friendships in the church.
- Shall understand that the outgoing pastor, if retired and remains in the community, will experience an emotional transition from pulpit to pew.
- Shall seek wisdom in understanding past experiences of the former pastor.
- Shall respect the leadership of his/her predecessor and not speak detrimental of his/her ministry.
- Shall understand that being called to a church is not an automatic opening for authority. It will take time to develop trust and confidence.
- Shall realize that he/she is now the shepherd of this congregation. It is his/her responsibility to lead and need not feel the intimidation of any predecessor.
- Shall realize that he/she has a different personality and leadership style than his/her predecessor. This variation is part of the beauty associated with pastoral change. This change may cause uneasiness with some parishioners. Their feelings must be respected and seen as opportunity to build relationships.

**Finally, know that church is not about the pastor or us. It is about Him who gave His Son for us. Let us endeavor to worship God and follow our Savior through the efforts and ministry of His Church.**