

## Guidelines for Pastoral Exit Interview\*

**Purpose:** An exit interview conducted just prior to the pastor's departure is important to accomplish these goals:

- to provide opportunity for the pastor (and spouse, if appropriate) and congregational representatives to say "thank you" in a manner that is more than just "thanks;"
- to take a final look at "how have things gone;"
- to bring meaningful closure prior to departure;
- to enhance future ministry and congregational life.

**Persons:** The interview should be conducted by those responsible for Pastor Congregation Relations. If there are other pastors on the team they should not be present. See also the footnote regarding possible participation by the Conference Minister or a representative of the Conference Ministerial Leadership Committee. If the pastor is married, the spouse should either be invited to participate in the exit interview or, depending upon the circumstances, be invited to a similar but separate interview with participants and process adjusted appropriately.

**Process:** Converse in a manner that is specific, direct, and nonjudgmental, without argument or debate – and includes careful listening and note taking:

1. about how things have gone in the ministry. Are there things we had hoped to accomplish and did? Are there things we had hoped to accomplish but didn't? Identify those areas that have been sources of blessings and those that have been sources of disappointments. Again, be alert to any areas which may emerge requiring specific attention for closure.
2. about our total relationship together. In what ways are the relationships different now than when the pastor first came? This would include a review of our relationships throughout the past years of ministry together, both its good times and bad times, acknowledging and celebrating both aspects of our friendship.
3. about our feelings toward each other. In what ways are they different now than when the pastor first came? This would include our feelings of love, affection, appreciation, and care. It would also include our disappointments and frustrations. Be alert to any areas which may emerge requiring specific attention for closure.
4. about our feelings regarding how the pastor's decision to leave was processed.
5. about appropriate recommendations from the pastor to congregational representatives and vice versa. These may emerge from the conversations related to 1-4. Allow them to happen, receive them with thanks.
6. about clarifying and reaching agreement upon the relationship the departing pastor will have after leaving the congregation.

**Prayer:** Spend time in prayer for each other -- preferably as a departing affirmation and thanks for the years together, and as a means of blessing each other as our paths separate.

Adapted from South Central Conference  
Richard Headings, Conference Minister  
Reviewed by Sven Eriksson, January 2005

\* Note: In most cases there will be a separate exit interview with the Conference Minister or Ministerial Leadership Committee. If such an interview is not planned, or if there is tension and emotionality around the pastor's exit, then there would be value in having the Conference Minister and/or a representative of the Ministerial Leadership Committee attend the congregational exit interview.

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