

## COVENANT OF CLOSURE: PASTORAL ETHICS WHEN LEAVING A CHURCH

The Rev. \_\_\_\_\_; the \_\_\_\_\_ Church of \_\_\_\_\_, Arizona, and the Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon having discussed the importance of making a clean break for a pastor who is leaving a church, enter into the following covenant:

1. The Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ agrees
  - a. not to involve him/herself in any leadership or advisory role (public or private) in the \_\_\_\_\_ Church of \_\_\_\_\_, Arizona.
  - b. not to intervene, support or give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement or dispute;
  - c. not to officiate in any special events in the lives of former parishioners or of the congregation, including weddings, funerals, baptisms, worship leadership, church anniversary activities, etc. unless expressly invited by the Moderator of the Session;
  - d. to refuse requests for pastoral services made by members of the \_\_\_\_\_ congregation;
  - e. to recognize that some conflicts make it unwise for a prior pastor to return to visit a previous congregation, and as a matter of professional courtesy, to establish an understanding with the new Moderator of Session regarding subsequent visits to the church, attending worship or attending a special event;
  - f. to refrain from giving opinions or direction regarding church business that could undermine the transition necessary for the church and the development of the relationship between the congregation and a new pastor;
  - g. in the event that the departing pastor continues to live in the area and does not begin service to another church, he/she will not normally attend congregational events for at least one year, or at least one year after a new pastor is installed. After this period, in consultation with and invitation by the session and the current pastoral leadership, the departing pastor may resume worshiping and fellowship within the congregation, provided that the requirements above continue to be observed; however
  - h. if the departing pastor has family, (spouse, children, grandchildren) who remain active in the former congregation, in consultation and with the approval of the current pastoral leadership, he/she may be attend isolated "special events" in the life of the relative, e.g., baptism, ordination, marriage, Christmas programs, always being careful to observe the criteria contained in this agreement.

It is understood that this policy does not affect or require the termination of friendships with individuals in the former congregation.

2. The Session and members of the \_\_\_\_\_ congregation agree
  - a. not to initiate pastoral or professional contact with previous pastors;
  - b. to respect the terms of the Covenant of Closure agreed upon by The Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ outlined above;
  - c. to interpret the terms of the Covenant of Closure to the congregation; and
  - d. to incorporate this agreement in the Session minutes.
  
3. The Presbytery of Grand Canyon's Commission on Ministry shall
  - a. interpret this Covenant of Closure to the Session of \_\_\_\_\_ Church;
  - b. be the Presbytery's agent in reminding the parties to this Covenant of Closure of the principles of the Covenant in the event any transgressions are reported to it;
  - c. note this agreement in the minutes of the Commission on Ministry; and
  - d. consider setting aside portions of this policy if requested by a departing pastor and the session of the former congregation.

I understand these policies and agree to abide by them.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of Session

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of church

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
Commission on Ministry representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date