



WHEN CLERGY LEAVE or RETIRE: CHANGING ROLES and BOUNDARIES

When a clergy person, either in charge or assisting, leave or retire, new roles and boundaries must be developed for the retiring or leaving clergy person, for the clergy's family, and for the members and staff of the parish. These guidelines address that transition.

THE LEAVING or RETIRING CLERGY PERSON

Because clergy have such a strong influence on every facet of parish life, clergy who retire or leave should be careful, and intentional, to avoid any participation in decision-making processes in the parish during and after the transition. The retiring or leaving clergy person does not participate in the selection of their successor, nor participate in advice for the search. When the departure is announced, the remaining work is to have an orderly and good “good-bye” from the parish.

These following steps are provided by the Bishop’s Office and should be considered standard policy:

- Do not attend any official parish function, including worship.
- Do not engage or discuss any pastoral liturgies. Refer any questions or requests for special liturgies, such as for weddings and funerals, to the new clergy person.
- To avoid triangulation and involvement in parish decisions, be cautious about attending social functions that are attended mostly by parishioners.
- Avoid discussions of concerns about the parish with parishioners. Refer such to the new rector.

- Provide to the Senior Warden a notebook or electronic file with instructions on passwords, location of documents, rationale for procedures, ongoing pastoral work, or any other matter that will smooth the transition for the successful arrival of the new rector.
- Disengage from all parish-based social media platforms.
- Nurture your worship and devotional life by attending other parishes.
- Continue to attend clergy meetings and retreats; participate in diocesan ministries.
- Do not return to the parish unless invited by the new rector.

THE PARISH

- Before leaving the clergy person should be given time and support to remove personal items from the office, allowing staff to assist.
- Unless the retirement or leaving clergy is due to misconduct, no one should be allowed access to the office of the clergy until confidential and sensitive files can be handed to designated parish leaders.
- Parish e-mail accounts must be closed, but records should be retained.
- The website should be updated with the new information.
- Passwords for social media, and signature cards should be changed.
- The staff should be given specific handling instruction for post office mail. Mail for the parish, addressed to the priest, will continue to arrive for many months. Discretion in opening mail is important, but all mail addressed to the parish is the responsibility of the parish to handle.
- The parish can assist the clergy person and their family in detaching from the parish by respecting these guidelines and keeping boundaries, thus allowing all to transition to new roles.

THE FAMILY

- In most cases, it is best for families of clergy to depart with them. Sensitivity should be shown to avoid triangulating family members with new leadership.

PASTORAL CARE

- The bishop and bishop's staff are available for pastoral care for the leaving or retiring clergy person and family.

WHEN / IF THE LEAVING or RETIRED CLERGY RETURNS

- The new rector and the retired or leaving clergy person may discuss and decide the nature of presence and participation in the life of the parish. Any conversation about the returning of the retired or leaving clergy person will occur no sooner than the one-year anniversary of the new rector and will be decided in consultation with the bishop.