



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN
COLORADO

Monday, July 10, 2023

TO: Active and Retired Clergy in the Episcopal Church in Colorado

Dear Ones,

Summer blessings! Thank you for the many ways you currently serve or have served the church as active clergy and now as retired clergy. Recently my canons and I have received a number of inquiries regarding best practices for leave-taking.

Since my consecration, many new calls have been made. The pandemic has had a significant impact on the health and vitality of our congregations. Both congregation members and clergy are finding that it has taken more time to get to know each other than it did pre-pandemic. In addition, fewer members are stepping up to serve in essential roles in supporting church ministries. As a result, more stress has been placed on clergy, congregation members, and the congregational system as a whole.

When a previous clergyperson re-enters the congregational system or engages with former congregation members, there can be an unconscious desire to return to the way church used to be instead of focusing on the cultural and societal realities that are currently present. The transition period calls upon congregations to wholeheartedly engage the work of discerning how God is calling us to live in a post-Christendom, post-pandemic world.

My goal as bishop is to create healthy congregational systems so that we may be agents of God's transformative love, justice, and peace. Therefore, I offer the best practices of leave-taking from across The Episcopal Church, including my expectations for retired clergy in the Episcopal Church in Colorado.

- Make plans to worship with another congregation. Pray and/or seek spiritual counsel about this, especially if you are retiring or are already retired.
- In all cases, the responsibility belongs to retired clergy to communicate to current or former parishioners that the pastoral relationship has ended.
- All pastoral and sacramental responsibilities end. Should a current or former parishioner contact you, it is your responsibility to refer them to the current clergy.
- While the congregation has been the center of clerical life, every effort should be made to form social ties outside of the congregation. Continuing social engagement with former parishioners impacts the ability of congregation members to form healthy pastoral relationships with the newly called clergy. Retired clergy are strongly urged to minimize social engagements with former parishioners.

- It is expected that clergy will not communicate with former parishioners about matters involving the church and will not meet with any members of the church for any reason during the interim period, and until new ordained leadership is fully integrated into the life of the church, and then only in consultation with the bishop and new priest, and at the invitation of your successor.
- Refrain from being involved in the search process. Do not comment on the profile or candidates, and do not consult with the profile, search committee, vestry, or bishop's committee.
- After a period of two years after the newly called priest has begun, you may request to attend your former church in consultation with the bishop and your successor.
- Should you wish to attend an event at your former parish, it is your responsibility to contact the current priest to ask for their permission to attend. Every effort should be made to minimize your presence.
- Avoid getting triangulated with members of the congregation and your successor.
- In the absence of a rector, vicar, or interim priest, the wardens are canonically responsible for the church's worship, finances, property, and administration.
- Remember, you have no official or canonical role in the parish you leave, and your priestly, pastoral, and administrative functions end on the effective date of your resignation or retirement. However, you may hold your former congregation and its people in your prayers.

I offer these guidelines to support the well-being and sustainability of our clergy and congregations. The Rev. Vanessa Stickler Glass, my Canon for Transition and Wellness, is available to speak with you about specific questions regarding your leave-taking whether you retired recently or retired prior to my consecration.

Faithfully,



The Right Reverend Kimberly D. Lucas
Bishop, The Episcopal Church in Colorado

The recommendations are adapted from Episcopal Church Foundation Vestry Papers.