

Presbytery of Great Rivers

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES ON MISCONDUCT

ATTACHMENT A

Acknowledgment

Presbytery of Great Rivers

Policies and Guidelines for Misconduct

This attachment to the Policies and Guidelines for Misconduct in the Presbytery of Great Rivers is to be signed by all candidates, ministers, and lay pastors of the Presbytery.

By signing this attachment, you acknowledge that you have received, read and understand the most recent Policies and Guidelines for Misconduct adopted by the Presbytery of Great Rivers. The Stated Clerk will report annually to presbytery the names of those ministers who have not submitted the form, and communicate to their session or employer their failure to comply.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

This document will be kept in your personnel file.

Please give your comments on how this policy might be improved:

**Please sign and email this page (only) to:
greatriverscom@gmail.com**

SECTION IV- PASTORAL ETHICS

Section IV: Part 1- Ministerial Misconduct Issues

1. Introduction

- a. Purpose. The purpose of these policies and guidelines for the PGR is to:
 - (1) Declare and maintain a high standard for the professional ministry.
 - (2) Prevent misconduct and abuse, safeguard the church, the church's members and staff from abuse through any form of misconduct.
 - (3) Seek justice by assuring effectiveness of the church's administrative, investigative and judicial processes in determining truth, protecting the innocent, and dealing appropriately with those who victimize others.
 - (4) Promote healing of all persons and congregations where misconduct has occurred, working to restore relationships broken by the misconduct, and seeking to bring healing to those who are found guilty of misconduct. When ministers engage in misconduct it is extremely damaging to everyone involved. It is far preferable for the COM to work at preventing misconduct by promoting and supporting healthy behaviors by church professionals and in congregations. Dealing with the aftermath of ministerial misconduct is inevitably difficult, painful, and time-consuming.
- b. PGR Norms
 - (1) The Need for Explicit Norms.

We believe that Jesus Christ calls us to standards of responsible conduct in all of life. We affirm on the basis of both scripture and the Presbyterian Constitution, that the behavior of church leaders must be exemplary.
 - (2) Application.

These policies and guidelines apply to all members of PGR, including Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Lay Pastors, and any who are approved for service in and for the PGR, including volunteers. It shall be the responsibility of sessions to set their own policies and guidelines for staff members and volunteers in congregations.
 - (3) General Assembly Standards of Ethical Conduct.

The PGR adopts as guidelines for behavior by ministers, elders and members, the "Standards of Ethical Conduct" adopted by the 210th General Assembly (1998). While the provisions of that document are not substitutes for the provisions of Scripture or the Constitution, the document is a useful teaching tool for the presbytery and sessions.
 - (4) Named Behaviors Not Comprehensive.

The list is not intended to be all-inclusive, nor is it intended to be a comprehensive commentary on the constitution of the church or civil law. No one should conclude, however, that what is not on the list is therefore permitted. Rather, the listing reflects some areas in which problems tend to arise.
- c. Standards

Standards for all Minister of Word and Sacrament members of Presbytery, those serving as Pastors and Commissioned Lay Pastors, Validated, At-Large and Honorably Retired Ministers of the Presbytery.

- (1) Privileged Clergy Communication. One of the most critical issues regarding confidentiality relates to child abuse. Although the civil law of Illinois does not make a minister as pastor a mandatory reporter, the Book of Order (Constitution) of the PCUSA does in many (G-4.0302) circumstances. The ethic of confidentiality is intended to assist people to get help for their problems. It is not intended to prevent people from being held accountable for their harmful actions or to keep them from getting the help they need.
- (2) Domestic Violence. Any form of physical or verbal abuse by a minister within family, whether of spouse, children, incapacitated persons, or the elderly is unacceptable.
- (3) Controlled Substances. Any form of use of “controlled substances” or illegal drugs is unacceptable. Any abusive use of alcohol and/or prescription drugs is unacceptable
- (4) Financial Responsibility. Ministers are expected to be responsible in personal and professional financial matters. When a minister borrows money, he/she is expected to repay the debt as agreed when undertaken. Ministers should not use church or members' funds, accounts, and/or resources for personal or private advantage. Ministers should not serve in the capacity of signing checks on church accounts, except in the case of a specifically designated pastoral discretionary fund.
- (5) Internet, social media and other electronic communication

Social Media Policy for Great Rivers Presbytery

The Presbytery of Great Rivers recognizes the importance of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, as a tool for contemporary ministry. However with any tool, there is the possibility for misuse or abuse, therefore the Presbytery of Great Rivers offers the following social media policy guidelines:

- 1.) Churches are encouraged to develop their own Facebook pages or groups for the sake of connectional ministry with laypeople helping to share in the posting and management of page and content.
Rationale: This helps the church in its communication and witness in the virtual mission field and helps ensure that its virtual ministry will not end at the termination of the pastorate.
- 2.) Pastors (including CLPs) should refrain from initiating personal friend requests with congregational members from current congregations and from past congregations unless a period of 5 years has elapsed since departure. Note: It is OK for pastors to accept “friend requests” from current church members should they desire to do so.
Rationale: A member might not want to be a pastor’s “Facebook friend” but might feel awkward denying such a request. By allowing the member to initiate the request, it respects the boundary of that member.
- 3.) Upon the conclusion of a pastor’s ministry, it is encouraged that pastors “unfriend” congregational members of the church they are departing from. If former church members choose to reinitiate a friend request, it is ok to accept provided this relationship is not of a pastoral nature.
Rationale: This allows the congregation to have a cleaner break from the ministry of the pastor and is in keeping with respecting traditional ministerial boundaries.
- 4.) Pastors should respect traditional ministerial boundaries with previous church members, including refraining from offering pastoral care.
- 5.) All ordained individuals (pastors, elders, and deacons) should refrain from:
 - Posting anything one would not say to another in person.
 - Posting anything that might reflect poorly on his/her capacity to lead, ability to express sound judgment, or overall maturity as an ordained leader in the PC(USA).

Rationale: Some comments individuals make on social media tend to be reactionary and akin to “a rant.” These can be embarrassing and reflect poorly on the individual posting them and the organizations they represent. Comments like these can be divisive and tear apart the Body. Often reactive comments are made without all the facts or information showing poor judgment on the part of the poster. Finally, spreading false assumptions can be akin to gossip. These behaviors are in contradiction to Scripture and violate one’s ordination vows.

- All ordained individuals (pastors, elders, and deacons) should refrain from:
 - Making inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct
 - Divulging confidential information
 - Posting any derogatory statements relating to another’s character or ministry

Rationale: Some of these behaviors are unethical and others are out-right illegal.

Please note that violations of these social media guidelines may subject the individual to civil, criminal, and/or ecclesiastical charges or discipline.

- All ministers, including those who fall into the category of General Assembly's listing of "other ministers" should respect the position of the installed pastors regarding all functions within the community. Weddings, funerals, and baptisms of church members are not to be performed by ministers unless an invitation has been offered by the pastor, the session when there is no pastor, or by permission of the presbytery. Validated, At- Large and Honorably Retired ministers are governed by the standards of the PGR.
- Violence, verbal or physical, by pastoral leaders against parishioners is clearly unacceptable.
- Services for Members of another Church. When a minister is called upon to officiate at a wedding or funeral, or counsel regarding baptism for families who are not members of his/ her congregation, he/she should ascertain whether they are members of a different church or denomination. If they are members of another congregation or denomination, they should be urged to procure the services of their own pastor. If the persons are members of another church, the minister is encouraged to consult with that pastor in advance of his/her services.
- Calling on Members of Neighboring Churches. The pastor's first responsibility is to the congregation he/she serves, and he/she should concentrate calling on the members of that congregation in home or hospital. The minister does not normally call on one who is a member of another congregation. However, if a pastor is requested to make a courtesy call on a non-member, the non-member's pastor is to be informed of the nature of the call.
- Multiple-staff Relationships. In ministerial staff relationships, as in all intra-church relationships, each staff member is responsible to contribute to the welfare of the whole church. Staff members are expected to speak directly about their differences and problems to the individual(s) with whom they differ and, if necessary, to the session's personnel committee. Innuendo and gossip are unacceptable. If a minister is working on a staff and concludes he/she is unable to manage relationships with other staff members in an effective manner, then he/she should consult with the COM for assistance to help resolve the conflict.
- When a Minister Leaves a Parish. When the relationship between the minister and the congregation is dissolved, that minister shall announce to the congregation that he/she will no longer be the pastor and, therefore, will not be available for pastoral services. It is also expected that the pastor's family members will be sensitive to issues related to closure. The proper role for a minister who is not serving in a permanent or temporary pastoral relationship to the congregation is the role of a friend and member of the worshipping congregations.

- **Special Gifts and Honoraria.** If there is a specific financial arrangement for a minister's services, it shall be determined in advance in consultation with the session. A pastor often receives additional honoraria beyond his/her terms of call. Examples include stipends for funerals, weddings, special lectures or presentations, the provision by church members of such things as club memberships, special arrangements for automobiles, private school tuition, etc. Further, many churches demonstrate their support for their pastor(s) and other staff by various bonuses. Pastors need to take care that such gifts not take on an obligatory nature and remember that all such income is taxable according to state and federal tax laws.
- **Matters of Conscience.** If a minister comes to the point in his or her faith and life when in good conscience it is no longer possible to abide by the polity of our denomination, he or she should work for change within the denomination, beginning with conversation with the COM. When and if that no longer seems a viable recourse, the pastor should abide by the polity and fulfill the ordination vows, or prayerfully consider leaving the denomination. It is unethical to encourage elders to deny their ordination vows, either by word or example.
- **Sexual Behavior.** Sexuality is a gift of God, and an integral part of who we are as persons. However, it can become the basis for oppression, when trust relationships are breached and persons are abused.

d. Context.

Misconduct issues are not new. It may seem that there is more malfeasance today, but there are no statistics that bear this out. What is known, however, is that sexual misconduct and other malfeasance issues are being reported more often today than ever before. Since 1985 churches have suffered numerous lawsuits related to various types of misconduct and numerous ministers have been removed or furloughed from their positions. While sexual misconduct gets the most attention, abuse of office related to financial matters also does great damage to Christ's church.

If the Rules of Discipline must be invoked, everyone involved will do well to remember the purpose of church discipline (D-1.0101). A harsh punitive attitude is not appropriate. Care for those who have been harmed is essential, as is a commitment "to achieve justice and compassion for all participants involved". It is helpful to recall that:

The power that Jesus Christ has vested in his Church, a power manifested in the exercise of church discipline, is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, not for punishing. It should be exercised as a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath so that the great ends of the Church may be achieved, that all children of God may be presented faultless in the day of Christ. (D-1.0102)

When misconduct occurs, COMs and others find themselves in the position of having responsibility both for the congregation that is deeply wounded as a result of the misconduct and for the church professional suffering shame and loss, and for her or his family, as well.

e. Categories.

Misconduct is behavior that is unethical and damaging to the ministry and the congregation. It usually falls into one or more of these categories:

- (1) sexual misconduct.
- (2) drug and alcohol abuse.
- (3) misuse or misappropriation of church funds.
- (4) misuse of internet, social media and other electronic communication.
- (5) misuse of power, role, or position (refer to your presbytery's policies on clergy misconduct and see also Standards for Ethical Conduct, available from Office of General Assembly at: www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/ethical-conduct.pdf)

f. Prohibited Sexual Behaviors

- (1) Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy and its procedures. No sexual relationship can or should exist between a minister and a member or employee except between pastor and spouse. The relationship between a minister and a church member is one of trust. Ministers experience different levels of interrelationships with members and employees. This requires the minister to be conscious of his/her professional responsibility to maintain appropriate relationships and boundaries. The office of Minister of Word and Sacrament carries with it a tremendous amount of responsibility, whether it is perceived or not. Ministers are responsible for maintaining the appropriate boundaries between themselves and members of the congregation, counselees, employees and also members of the general public.
- (2) Child sexual abuse, as defined in the Policy, "includes but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. No upper age limit for child sexual abuse has been given in this policy because the age of adulthood varies from state to state. The upper age limit is intended to be that recognized in the state in which the act was committed." (p. 12)
- (3) Sexual harassment, as defined in the Policy, is as follows: "Unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct or a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or a condition or an individual's employment or their continued status in an institution; submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment." (p. 13)
- (4) Rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation;
- (5) Sexual conduct (such as offensive, obscene or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching or fondling) that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another;
- (6) Sexual malfeasance defined as sexual conduct within a ministerial (e.g., clergy with a member of the congregation) or professional relationship (e.g., counselor with a client, lay employee with a church member, presbytery executive with a committee member who may be a layperson, a minister, or an elder). Sexual conduct includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition is not meant to cover relationships between spouses, nor is it meant to restrict church professionals from having normal, social, intimate, or marital relationships;

- (7) Sexual Harassment. Sexual harassment, pursuant to the EEOC and Illinois Department of Human Rights, consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, non-verbal, or physical acts of a sexual or sex-based nature
- (8) Sexual abuse as found in Book of Order (D-10.0401a)(D-10.0401b) is any maltreatment or undue advantage taken involving sexual conduct in relation to:
- any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or
 - any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position.
- (9) Pornography: Pornography is material that depicts sexual activity or erotic behavior in a way designed to arouse sexual excitement, whether determined to be obscene or not.
- (10) Sexually Offensive Behavior. Ministers must take care to avoid either sexually overt or oriented language or behavior. The minister is in an unequal, power position in his or her professional setting. His or her inappropriate sexual references and behavior can intimidate and sexually harass those with whom he or she works or those to whom he or she ministers. The minister alone is responsible for seeing that this behavior does not occur.

Section IV: Part 2 - Role of COM in Dealing with Misconduct

a. Responsibilities

When there has been misconduct or malfeasance, the COM has two responsibilities:

- (1) to deal with immediate situations of misconduct as they arise, and
- (2) to help church professionals and congregations develop as healthy individuals in healthy relationships.

b. Prevention of Misconduct

- (1) These policies and guidelines shall be distributed to all ministers, Ruling Elders, employees, volunteers, and entities of the PGR. A new copy shall be sent to them whenever a change is adopted by presbytery. A new acknowledgment must be signed and submitted when any change is adopted in the policy. These policies and guidelines shall be made available to all persons who accuse others of misconduct as well as those accused of misconduct.
- (2) All candidates, ministers, and employees of the PGR are required to sign a written acknowledgment (see FORMS - Misconduct Policy) indicating that they have received a copy of these Policies and Guidelines on Misconduct. Such acknowledgment will be kept in the person's personnel file. The Stated Clerk will report annually to presbytery the names of those ministers who have not submitted the form, and communicate to their session or employer their failure to comply.

- (3) All ministers seeking new calls within the PGR shall complete the PIF currently being distributed by the Church Leadership Connection of the PC(USA), including Sexual Misconduct Information or its successor form and shall allow the presbytery to do a background check on criminal, financial, and driving information.
- (4) The calling or employing body is responsible for contacting references for prospective ministers, employees, or volunteers.
- (5) The PGR and all its committees, and organizations will adhere to this policy, including its standards, procedures, and practices.
- (6) The PGR will provide an annual training workshop on misconduct for all ministers, candidates, and elders serving as Commissioned Lay Pastors in the PGR, who shall be required to attend each year. Employees and volunteers of the PGR will be encouraged to attend. The Stated Clerk will report annually to PGR the names of those ministers, candidates and elders serving as Commissioned Lay Pastors who have not attended a workshop, and communicate to their session or employer their failure to attend. The content of the workshop will include at least the following:
 - Why the PGR has a Policies and Guidelines for Behavior.
 - The presbytery's Policies and Guidelines for Behavior.
 - The General Assembly's statements of ethical behavior for members, volunteers and employees, and ordained officers.
 - The broader issues of professional behavior and conduct in the workplace.
 - Why each congregation needs its own Policies and Guidelines for Behavior, sexual misconduct policy and child safety policy.
 - Model congregational policies.
 - Why each congregation needs its own liability insurance for misconduct.
 - Available resources within the presbytery for counseling services for personal, emotional and family problems, and for drug and sexual addiction.

c. Disciplinary, Judicial and Administrative Processes

(1) Disciplinary Process.

All allegations of misconduct will be investigated through the appropriate process. In cases of members under the jurisdiction of the PGR, the judicial process as provided in the Rules of Discipline will be followed. In cases involving employees, the provisions of the personnel policy will be followed. For employees who are members of PGR, both personnel policy provisions and disciplinary process will apply.

(2) Administrative Process.

Following an allegation of misconduct against a staff member of the PGR or a member of presbytery serving a church or agency, the appropriate committee (COM or personnel) shall consult with the person making the allegation, the person against whom the allegation is made, and the involved session to ascertain whether the circumstances would be aided by the person against whom the allegation is made being advised to take a paid administrative leave. If the person against whom the allegation is made refuses and the presbytery believes it imperative, the presbytery may proceed to remove the person. The COM or other body may also request that an administrative commission be appointed to deal with the discord caused by the alleged misconduct. The COM will help congregations find transitional or supply pastors trained in responding to congregations where abuse has occurred. The COM also will appoint persons to work carefully with the session to recognize and deal with denial and anger that typically accompanies abuse allegations.

(3) Judicial Process.

If the clerk receives written allegations under D-10.0100, the clerk shall convene the team charged with selecting the members of the investigating committee (D-10.0202 and PGR Manual of Operations Section II "The Appointment of an Investigating Committee") that shall meet as soon as possible after its formation. The investigating committee shall conduct its investigation in accordance with D-10.0202.

d. Involuntary Dissolution

See Section II: Part 1 -C Involuntary Dissolution (page 10)

e. Agreement for Termination and Separation

Dissolution - Certification of Dissolution of a Pastoral or Associate Relationship (page 60)

Dissolution - Terms of Dissolution between pastor and church (page 61)

Section IV: Part 3 - Statement of Ethic for Departing Pastors

When a pastor leaves a charge there are bonds of affection between the minister and members of the church that continue to be cherished. Relations of friendship continue, but the pastoral relationship does not. In order to spare ministers and church members from embarrassment, and to encourage the new pastoral relationship that will be established, the presbytery directs that the church be reminded of these requirements:

When any minister resigns from a pastorate or retires from service, or becomes a pastoremeritus, the minister should cease to perform such functions of a pastor as funerals, baptisms, and weddings, unless invited to officiate in such capacity by the pastor or by the moderator of vacant churches. (G.A. Min. 1948, p.119, Status of Retired Ministers) The spirit of this action applies to all ministers of the church, whether retired or not, and whether they have ever served as pastors of particular churches. (G.A. Min. 1959, p.208, Overture 39).

In short, church members should not request a former pastor to perform pastoral duties. If requested, the pastor should tactfully decline.

Section IV: Part 4 - Final Words to be shared by all PGR Departing Pastors

In any church, there are always those members who have special bonds with the pastor, sometimes through friendship, sometimes because the pastor was there when a loved one died, or any number of reasons. One temptation churches have when a pastor leaves is to ask that pastor to come back for significant events - weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc. Our denomination has a very clear ethics polity that everyone serving a church is expected to abide by. Included in this is the understanding that I will not be coming back to do weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc., unless there are extenuating circumstances, and even then, ONLY upon the express invitation of the pastor or moderator of session. This is because when former pastors return for these significant events, they hinder the ability of the current pastor to effectively be the pastor of the congregation. All of which means, if you ask and I say no, don't take it personally! I still love you, I just can't marry you. I wish you all the best for the future, and may God go with you.

Manual of Operations PCUSA Standards for Ethical Conduct

Click HERE:

[http://www.greatriverspby.org/uploads/2/4/5/6/24561669/
manual_of_operations_pcusa_standards_for_ethical_conduct.pdf](http://www.greatriverspby.org/uploads/2/4/5/6/24561669/manual_of_operations_pcusa_standards_for_ethical_conduct.pdf)

DCFS Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status Form

Click HERE:

[http://www.greatriverspby.org/uploads/2/4/5/6/24561669/
dcfs_acknowledgement_of_mandated_reporter_status_form.pdf](http://www.greatriverspby.org/uploads/2/4/5/6/24561669/dcfs_acknowledgement_of_mandated_reporter_status_form.pdf)

LITANY OF FAREWELL #1
For the End of the Transitional Journey

Leader A church family is constantly changing. Loved ones come to the end of their lives. Individuals and families come and go in our church life. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we say farewell to Pastor _____, whose time as our transitional pastor has come to an end.

Pastor: I thank _____ Church, its members and friends, for the love, kindness and support shown me these last months. I thank you for accepting my leadership. I recall with joy the many things we have been able to accomplish together and with sadness the things we were not able to do. I ask your understanding and forgiveness for the mistakes I made and for the times I let you down.

Congregation: We receive your thankfulness, and we offer our forgiveness for any failures. We accept that you now leave us to minister elsewhere. Your influence on us will not leave us, even though you depart from us. We express gratitude for your time among us and ask your forgiveness for our shortcomings and sometimes flagging faith.

Pastor: I forgive you your failures and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to the Christ we are called to serve.

Leader: Do you, the members and friends of _____ Church, now release Pastor _____ from the duties of transitional pastor?

Congregation: We do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you, Pastor _____, release _____ Church from turning to you and depending on you?

Pastor: I do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here at _____ Church?

Pastor: I do, with the help of God.

Leader: Let us pray.

Congregation: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future, which rests in your care. During our time together we have experienced laughter and tears, hopes and disappointments. Guide us as we carry these cherished memories with us in new directions until the time when we are completely one with you and one another. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Leader: Go, now, Pastor _____, surrounded by our love and led by the promises of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LITANY OF FARWELL #2

This may be used prior to the benediction on the last Sunday of worship when a pastor's service to a congregation comes to an end. It is important to say goodbye in a way that makes space in the life of the congregation for the next pastor. Depending on the situation, it may be appropriate to use this litany with the rite of Farewell and Godspeed (Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pastoral Care p. 354) and to include the pastor's family in the farewell. This litany can be repeated at all services of the last weekend.

Leader: A church family is constantly changing. Loved ones come to the end of their lives. Individuals come and go in our church life. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share a time of farewell with Pastor _____, whose time as our transitional pastor ends.

Pastor: I thank the congregation of _____ Church, its members and its friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown to me over these last months/years. I ask your understanding and forgiveness for mistakes I have made and for expectations unmet. I am grateful that my leadership has been accepted. With joy I recall the many things we have been able to accomplish together and with sadness the many things we were not able to accomplish together.

Congregation: We receive your thankfulness, and we offer our forgiveness for any failures, and our thanks for all accomplishments. We accept that you now leave us to minister elsewhere. We express our gratitude for your time among us and ask your forgiveness for our shortcomings and sometimes flagging faith. Your influence on our lives will not leave us even though you depart from us.

*Pastor: I forgive you your failures and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to **God and** to the Christ we are called to serve.*

Leader: Do you the members and friends of _____ Church now release Pastor _____ from the duties of pastor?

Congregation: We do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for Pastor _____'s continuing ministry?

Congregation: We do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you, Pastor _____, release _____ Church from turning to you or depending upon you?

Pastor: I do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here at _____ Church?

Pastor: I do, with the help of God.

Leader: Let us pray.

Congregation: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and our disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories but now move in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Leader: Go now, Pastor _____, surrounded by our love and led by the promises of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.