

Interim Ministry Resources

Chapter 11 Collegiality

Separation Ethics Handout (5)

Considerations on Separation Ethics

A Time for Lasts – Alban at Duke Divinity School - Building up Congregations and Their Leaders

The “lasts” of ministry’s winter season reminds us of the importance of work in shaping our personal identity prior to **retirement** and after it. According to students of the psychology of retirement, a person’s work serves a variety of psychological and structural functions in her or his life, including a sense of personal worth and accomplishment, relationships and friendships, prestige and recognition, novelty and creativity, service to the larger community, and the passing of time. From a holistic perspective on ministerial vocation in which being and doing are intimately related, the high degree of unsettledness pastors experience as they contemplate their retirement is normal, especially during the first months following their departure from full-time ministry. Even pastors well-versed in boundary training are tempted to quite innocently violate boundaries in order to hang on to some sense of their old identity. There are great temptations to drop in at the office on the way to the market or stop by the women’s or men’s fellowship group during its monthly meeting in the social hall. But after a few minutes of mutual awkwardness, the retired pastor and his former colleagues and parishioners know that it is time to go. As one recently retired United Church of Christ pastor noted, “It’s a humbling and somewhat alienating experience to know that you no longer belong in a place where you were once the center of action and the primary actor. More than that, your presence in the area may be seen by judicatory officials and the new pastor as an intrusion, undermining the authority of your successor. When judicatory officials ask how I’m doing, I feel the underlying message is ‘Are you behaving yourself? Are you staying away from the church?’”

<https://alban.org/archive/a-time-for-lasts/>

<http://www.amazon.com/Four-Seasons-Ministry-Gathering-Righteousness/dp/1566993660>

[Images for Time for Lasts – Alban](#)

Congregations in Transition: Moving into the Future

The Interim Pastor will:

- I. Agree not to become a member of this congregation after this agreement terminates.

[PDF] The Call Process - Amazon Simple Storage Service

https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/0a/0a854394-3a19-4d9f-b1ae-f93021508921/documents/Call_Process_Booklet_2016.pdf

Page 70

Call Process Booklet - Yumpu

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/53432941/call-process-booklet>

Page 43

[Images of congregations in transition moving into the future](#)

Guidelines for Retired Ordained Ministers – Amazon Web

Ordained ministers may retire upon attainment of age 60, or after 30 years on the roster of ordained ministers of this church or one of its predecessor bodies, or upon disability, and continue to be listed on the roster of ordained ministers of this church, upon endorsement by the synodical bishop, by action of a Synod Council in the synod in which the ordained minister is listed on the roster . . . (bylaw 7.41.17. in the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

Persons who have served within the ordained ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and who have determined that they will enter retirement are not only to be honored for their past service but are seen as important resources for ministry within the life of this church. To enter this new phase of one’s life is always a significant milestone. It is a transition into another important stage of life for every retired person. It is true also for the retired pastor (and spouse if the pastor is so blessed).

The following statement is a guideline for retired pastors, the congregations they served, and synodical bishops in understanding the new status of a retired pastor to give directions which seek to avoid some pitfalls that can present themselves to the retired pastor, and to new areas of service and support.

I. ROSTER OF ORDAINED MINISTERS

A retired pastor is on the roster of the synod in which last under call or in which the pastor resides. The retired pastor remains accountable to the synodical bishop where rostered. A retired pastor must be a member of an ELCA congregation in order to remain on the roster of ordained ministers and remains subject to the standards for ordained ministers of this church.

II. CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

A retired pastor should not remain a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. Transferring one’s membership to another congregation allows the successor pastor to assume pastoral leadership more readily. It also provides an opportunity for the retired pastor to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the pastor’s retired role.

III. PASTORAL SERVICE

At the time of retirement, a pastor is no longer pastor of a congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in the congregation unless specifically authorized to do so.

The service of retired pastors is governed by the Constitution for Synods [†S14.14.], which describes the role of ordained ministers in congregations in which they do not serve:

“Ordained ministers shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council” (†S14.14. in the Constitution for Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

IV. INTERIM MINISTRY

One area of potential service for the retired pastor is interim ministry. Many retired pastors provide valuable and needed ministry to congregations in time of transition following the resignation of a pastor. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America invites retired pastors to consider this important arena of ministry.

A retired pastor may serve as an interim pastor during a time of pastoral vacancy only by the authorization of the synodical bishop. Retired pastors who wish to serve under call in an interim ministry must return to the active roster of ordained ministers.

V. COMPENSATION

Retirement benefits provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through the Board of Pensions, combined with Social Security benefits, are intended to provide adequate compensation to pastors in retirement. Therefore, there shall be no financial commitment by a congregation or agency to retired pastors or their spouses.

A. A retired pastor who is authorized to serve (not under call) in a congregation for a stated period of time and for pastoral services may be compensated according to compensation practices within the synod.

B. The title of Pastor Emeritus has no official standing and carries with it no compensation or authorization for service or for other responsibilities.

VI. CONSULTATION WITH SYNODICAL BISHOP

As part of the bishop's pastoral care of retired pastors, a synodical bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to meet with a pastor at the time of retirement to discuss these guidelines, the pastor's new retired status, and its implications.

Adopted by the Church Council as policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, November 1998 [CC98.11.45]

<http://worshiptimesmedia.s3.amazonaws.com/gulfcoast/files/2013/06/GuidelinesforRetiredOrdainedMinisters.pdf>

Images of guidelines for retired ordained ministers

Former pastor too close? - The Lutheran Magazine

'His presence is hurting our church'

Our pastor of three years is excellent. The former pastor, who was here 15 years, is kind, gentle, good-natured and well-liked. We were sad to see him go. But he went only 50 miles away and frequently socializes with our members. His presence is strong and hurts our church. Other pastors have mentioned this to him, but he claims it's the new pastor's problem. What is proper contact?

http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=1590

Images for Former pastor too close? - The Lutheran Magazine 'His presence is hurting our church'

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/issues/>

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/contact-us/>

Importance of Healthy Boundaries

While some may feel such boundaries are insensitive or even harsh, experience has shown that problems inevitably arise when the congregation and the former pastor continue their pastoral relationship in any way. The involvement of the former pastor after the next pastor has been called undermines and prevents the new relationship from forming. In particular, the trust that is essential to the pastor-congregation relationship cannot fully develop. This, in turn, negatively affects the ability of the congregation and the next pastor to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ.

Pastoral Leadership Transition Process

http://gracelutherandh.com/documents/2011/Transition_Guide_Final_12-3-2010.pdf

Page 12

Images of importance of healthy pastoral boundaries

[PDF] Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

E. Completion of Pastoral Responsibilities: The role of pastors in congregations to which they are not (or are no longer) called is governed by the Constitution for Synods, which states, "Ordained ministers shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council" (†S14.14. in the Constitution for Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). Ordained ministers who have completed their pastoral call to a particular congregation change their role in how they relate to that congregation, and care should be taken to provide for an orderly transition. Certain ministerial functions are specific to, and performed on behalf of, the congregation not the individual, and are therefore the responsibility of the ordained minister serving under call, or one appointed by the synodical bishop or contracted by the Congregation Council for such ministry. Although to be regarded as affirmations of the pastor's past service to the congregation, requests from members for the former pastor to preside at weddings, baptisms, funerals, and the like should politely be refused. Regardless of whether the pastor has accepted a call to another congregation or another expression of this church, the completion of pastoral responsibilities must be marked clearly and carefully. The following guidelines are for pastors, the congregations they served, and synodical bishops in understanding the new status of a pastor who has resigned a call. They are intended to affirm the past ministry of such pastors, to give directions which seek to avoid some pitfalls that can present themselves during transitions, and to point to constructive and healthful interactions in the future.

1. Upon the effective date of the resignation, the ordained minister no longer is a pastor of the congregation, and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in that congregation.

2. Care must be taken by the pastor to assure that the parochial record of pastoral acts conducted within the congregation is up to date. As required by *C9.14. in the Model Constitution for Congregations and †S14.15. in the Constitution for Synods, the secretary of the congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop that the record was received, in good order, before the departing pastor can be installed in a new charge or be granted retired status. Attention also must be given to "... make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations ..." to the congregation before departure (*C.9.08. and †S14.16.).

3. Prior to, but as near to, the effective date of the resignation as is practicable, the ordained minister may make use of the rite of "Farewell and Godspeed" during which the pastor may return to representatives of the congregation the signs of the ministerial office that were given at the pastor's installation.

4. If invited to exercise a ministerial role by a member of a congregation to which they are not called, ordained ministers should indicate that they are not (or are no longer) authorized to take such a role. If invited to exercise such a role by the current pastor, care must be taken to assure that the parameters and limited scope of the activity are clear.
5. As part of the bishop's pastoral care, especially during times of transition, a synodical bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to discuss these guidelines and their implications either in person or in correspondence.

http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Policies_Procedures_Roster_Mgmt.pdf
[Images for Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the ELCA](#)

Part One, pages 10-11

Saying Goodbye

Former Pastors: The responsibility of establishing boundaries is yours. When asked by former parishioners, respond immediately, "It's simply not proper for me to do that. I'm not your pastor anymore."

Call Process Booklet EDITED - Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

http://www.nwswi.org/webfiles/fnitools/documents/call_process_rev11.17.09smaller.pdf Page 10

Call Process Booklet - Yumpu

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/53432941/call-process-booklet>

[Images of saying goodbye former pastors](#)

Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors by Edward A. White

Ten Effects a Departed Pastor's Continuing Contacts Have on a Congregation:

1. Contacts continue to resurface for members whenever negative emotions were present at the pastor's departure.

Regret	"It's not like it used to be."
Inadequacy	"He left us for a better church."
Guilt	"Why didn't I do enough to make her stay?"
Anger	"Why did he leave us flat?"
Loneliness	"I miss her."
Frustration	"If he were here I could cope."
Relief	"I'm glad he's gone and we don't have to do that anymore!"
2. Contacts deny members the opportunity to work through those emotions of grief directly and constructively, and encourage their futile grappling with ghosts.
3. Contacts discourage members' working through their feelings within the community ("I'd better not tell my deacon that I called the old pastor") and encourage a rivalry among members ("The pastor called me!")
4. Private contact with individuals deprive the community of the opportunity to share grief and loneliness, to build the strength that comes from shared suffering, to discover resurrected hope that emerges from shared struggles.
5. Contacts focus members' energy outside the congregation at a time when that energy may be needed most within the community.
6. Private communications encourage "holding on" to the past and righting former battles – this time with the invisible contenders, who decrease a person's ability to struggle with present realities and diminish hope for the future.
7. Contacts confuse persons as to where and how to direct their commitment to new leadership; they make that difficult task even more difficult for members.
8. Each contact places the resident pastor in the awkward position of interloper. Interim specialists are trained to deal with the negativism so that the installed pastor can begin positive building at the earliest opportunity.
9. By surfacing implicit comparisons between new and old, contacts undermine the choice of a new pastor and inhibit a whole-hearted commitment to the new relationship.
10. Contacts keep the new pastor on the defensive and subvert that pastor's morale and effectiveness. The new pastor can never successfully compete with the old pastor's enshrined "ghost" so long as that ghost is actively present.

Source: Saying Goodbye by Edward A. White

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=1566996244>

Page 98

http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/424632.Saying_Goodbye

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/saying-goodbye-edward-a-white/1123958205>

<https://www.amazon.com/Saying-Goodbye-Growth-Congregations-Pastors/dp/1566990378>

<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781566990370/Saying-Goodbye-A-Time-of-Growth-for-Congregations-and-Pastors>

[Images for Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors by Edward A. White](#)

[PDF]Pastoral Ethics and Leave-Taking - Gulf Coast Synod

The following draws heavily upon the following Alban Institute publication by Edward A. White - *Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors* – a helpful resource for those wishing to review this topic further.

Leaving a pastorate is hard on both congregation and pastor. Learn how to make this transition a growth experience for all. Written for congregations and pastors, *Saying Goodbye* skillfully weaves accounts from clergy, laity, and educators of seven denominations with White's own insight as a former General Presbyter to create a resource for meaningful and healthy partings. Includes examples of a "farewell" worship service and litany for closure of a ministry.

<http://www.amazon.com/Saying-Goodbye-Growth-Congregations-Pastors/dp/1566990378>.

Changing Roles

When a pastor leaves a congregation, members may feel they have lost a trusted friend. Like the eternal presence of God, the presence of God's ministers takes on an aura of permanence, and members are surprised and hurt when the relationship must end. The break is often as hard for the congregation as for the pastor.

It is extremely difficult to shift roles. The pastor ceases to be the pastor and a friend, and becomes friend only; members cease being one's flock and friends, and become friends only. Relationships must be redefined apart from the ecclesiastical roles. The pain of such change only compounds the sense of mutual loss and grief.

Making Contact

Before a pastor's departure, it was customary for members to seek (and for pastors to give) friendly concern, sympathy, visits, cards, letters, hospital calls, sacramental services, taped sermons, and conversation about the congregation's life and future. After the pastor's departure, there is often a persistent tendency to continue these contacts as if to —hang on to each other and to the good that was. These contacts very often occur in a covert way, as though it is not OK for the new leaders to know about them, since continuing contacts are private matters —just between old friends.

A member in contact with a former pastor, however, generally focuses individually on that relationship and may not see how maintaining that connection affects other members or impedes developing a healthy and proper relationship with the new pastor.

The contact usually takes one of the following forms by retired and former pastors:

- Returning to former congregations to perform weddings, funerals or baptisms.
- Continuing to make pastoral visits on members of the congregation.
- Injecting themselves into the life and problems of former congregations and/or advising members on these issues.
- Criticizing the successor pastor to members of the congregation or becoming the confidant of those who wish to express criticism.

The Problem

The problem may lie in our understanding of the church. If the church is centered in the relationship of the pastor and the people, then it might be argued that a pastor's congregation is all those people throughout the land who have come to rely on them as their pastor. But, if the church is centered in Christ and a pastor is but a servant of that one Lord, then a pastor's congregation is those who — in this time and place only — have been entrusted to them. It is then an issue of pastoral ethics to fail to recognize that the church currently installed pastor of the congregation is the pastor of the congregation and to undermine that person's ministry is a betrayal of one's ordination vow and the constitutional requirements of the larger church.

-At the time of retirement, a pastor is no longer pastor of a congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in the congregation unless authorized to do so. (*On Ordained Ministers: Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters*, ELCA Section III). Furthermore:

-A retired pastor should not remain a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. Transferring one's membership to another congregation allows the successor pastor to assume pastoral leadership more readily. (Section II).

-Ordained ministers shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council. (*Mission Area Constitution*, S14.14).

Effects of Continuing Contact

Consider what happens when a pastor fails to let go of his/her former pastorate:

- Members delay or deny the necessary grief work and get emotionally stuck.
- When the congregation must work through a problem, the unseen (or seen) presence of a former pastor complicates the ability to have an open dialog.
- When members turn privately to a former pastor for comfort and care, it deprives the community the opportunity to build the strength that comes from shared struggles.
- Private contacts direct members' energy outside the congregation when that energy may be needed within the community.
- Private contacts encourage —holding on to the past and fighting former battles; they decrease the congregation's ability to struggle with present realities and create a new future.
- Contacts confuse members about where and how to focus their commitment.
- Private contacts place the resident pastor in the awkward position of interloper.
- By surfacing implicit comparisons between new and old, the new pastor is forced to contend with ghosts.
- Private contacts keep the new pastor on the defensive and subvert that pastor's morale and effectiveness.

Members are confused. Pastors are hurt. Congregational life may be brought to conflict. And the church's true *passion*—which is to be consumed by the mission of Christ—is diverted instead to personal loyalties and relationships. It is clear that former pastors and members need to manage interpersonal contacts appropriately.

<http://gulfcoastsynod.myworshiptimes22.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/49/2013/01/LeaveTaking.pdf>

Images of pastoral ethics and leave-taking

Retirement Boundaries

When a pastor retires, there is sometimes the temptation to “retire into” the congregation last served. “Pastor Emeritus” is even a status sometimes officially (or unofficially) granted. However, upon retirement, pastors should never retain membership in the congregation they last served. They must seek membership in another congregation. It is sometimes relatively easy to point out situations when the presence of a retired clergy person caused difficulty for their successor. However, even in situations where it seems to be “going well,” the truth is that there is no way of knowing the unintentional and often subtle detrimental effects the presence of former pastors and rostered leaders can have on the ability of a congregation to move forward in ministry with its new pastor/leaders. Everybody needs to “move on!”

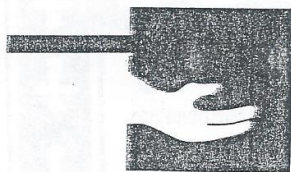
Retirement Boundaries

Section 1 “Termination”/Page 2

[PDF]Transition Process Handbook – Gulf Coast Synod

<http://192.168.1.1:8181/http://gulfcoastsynod.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/142/2013/01/TransitionHandbook.pdf>

Images of pastor retirement boundaries



SHARING

Ideas and observations for partners in ministry

The Ethics of Exiting

Roger Nicholson

Intentional interim ministers seek to guide congregations during the transition between installed pastors. There are five developmental tasks to be undertaken during the interim period. All of the tasks are impacted by the former pastor if he or she continues to be "present" to the parish, whether visibly or invisibly. This article is an attempt to suggest how the pastor who leaves can help or hinder this necessary adjustment.

1). *Coming to terms with history* means many things but it practically always means adjusting to the loss of a pastor. That adjustment takes different forms for different people.

For many it is a grieving process if the departed pastor was much loved. Not infrequently it is a case of resolving feelings of conflict which focused on the former pastor, feelings which include anger and guilt. Coming to terms with history means the congregation gains perspective on the previous ministry, affirms its contributions, and brings closure to it.

Clearly, if the departed pastor keeps reappearing or maintains pastoral contacts by telephone or mail, the congregation's adjustment to change is delayed. Indeed, closure may never really take place for some parishioners and this negatively affects the new pastorate. Too often new pastorates are short-lived because a congregation is stuck in the past.

2). *Discovering a new identity* is essential for a congregation anticipating a new pastor. Some churches need to learn that "there is life after the Rev. Graham leaves." The church will not dissolve; its mission remains and needs only to be clarified and understood for

a new time under a different leader. Interim pastors can help churches gain perspective on strengths and weaknesses, see what special contribution they have to offer, and plan for their future ministry as a people of faith.

Influence Like Anchor

This work, however, will be hindered by the former pastor's influence if he or she remains on the scene or maintains contact with lay leaders. The former pastor's programmatic emphases, style, and influence tend to act like an anchor, impeding the congregation's voyage into a new time.

3). *Preparing for new leadership* is another crucial task. Interim pastors not only model a different ministerial style but help a congregation to expect a different kind of leader than the one to whom they are accustomed. This task is made more difficult if the former pastor remains involved in the parish.

Adjusting to a different style of ministry is only part of the task. Changes may be needed in a congregation's expectations about support for the pastor. One congregation needed to face up to the woeful condition of the parsonage. It was not helpful for the previous pastor to tell people the parsonage was just fine and they shouldn't spend money on it.

4). *Shifts in lay leadership and changes in congregational power structures* occur during a time of ministerial change. It is natural for pastors to develop strong ties with particular key lay leaders. A leader develops a team he or she can work with. When the leader departs, the "team" may un-

CHURCH TORCH CANDLE®



"REAL CANDLELIGHT"

- Safe
- Clean
- Beautiful

"...non-flammable cup"
SHIELDING THE FLAME FROM
FIRE HAZARDS

"...collects wax"
MAINTAINS CLEANLINESS,
STOPS WAX DRIPPING ON
PEOPLE'S HANDS AND FLOORS

"...reusable"
CUP CAN BE USED REPEATEDLY
FOR MORE SERVICES

"...different colours"
CUP COLOURS - RED, WHITE,
BLUE, CLEAR

"...price"
packaged 100/box \$ 79.00/box
packaged 400/case \$289.00/case

Church Torch Candle comes
complete with candle and cup

FREE SHIPPING

TOLL FREE ORDER

1-800-387-1044

FAX: (416) 468-5278

**NEWVILLE 88
CORPORATION**

Suite 281
3840 E. Robinson
North Tonawanda, NY 14120

Free Video



"The Weaver"

(26 minutes)

*A Christian Perspective
On Suffering & Separation*

From the Producers of:

"Love Is The Answer" Series

Order A Copy For Your
Congregation

1-800-443-4899

"The Weaver" features
Bishop Sherman Hicks
Metro-Chicago Synod ELCA

Nebraska Synod Council
Members after previewing

"The Weaver" said:

"Excellent!"

"A powerful voice for
all who suffer!"

"Beautifully done!"

Martin Luther Home, Beatrice, NE

SHARING

ravel or it may remain entrenched. If the team's primary commitment was to the departed leader, change is surely indicated. This change needs to be allowed to happen. It is not helpful for a departed pastor to have input about future lay leadership.

5). Finally, the task of *renewing denominational linkages* can be adversely affected by a disenchanted former pastor who communicates negative feelings to parishioners or discounts the need for the church to have supportive ties to the denomination.

Interim pastors frequently find that a poor understanding of the denomination prevails in many interim congregations. There has been either a lack of communication about the wider church by the former pastor or minimizing the need for the denomination. Departed pastors may perpetuate such a mindset from afar precisely at a time when the congregation can greatly ben-

efit from the resources of the denomination.

Intentional interim ministers agree that there is more stress and conflict around the issue of former pastors who continue to play a pastoral role from afar than around any other issue. Complete and consistent closure of the former pastorate is crucial to the healthy progress of the congregation under a new minister.

Roger Nicholson is an interim pastor, Minister-at-Large, of the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ.

Used by permission of *The In-Between Times*, published by the Interim Ministry Network.

At Cathedral Candle Company, superior church candles are created in a way of the past that is still a way of the present...with deep-rooted fourth generation family skills and old world hand craftsmanship quality.

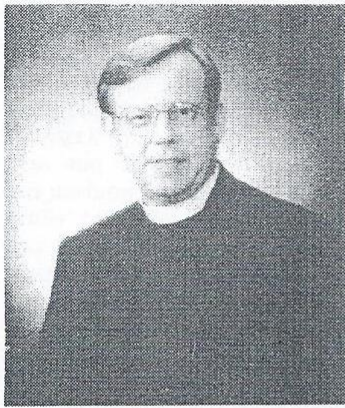
SINCE 1897

Cathedral
CANDLE COMPANY

At Cathedral Candle Company, church candles are handcrafted with only choice pure, natural waxes. These unequalled waxes are highly favored for their matchless bleaching and burning qualities.

Cathedral Candles Are Available At Your Nearest Location

Augsburg Fortress



Bishop Robert D. Berg

Just Say No -- The Best Policy

This is a much larger issue than many would expect. I continue to be made aware of congregations where former pastors are creating problems through exercising a pastoral presence or engaging in pastoral acts in the congregation or community.

-- Bishop Berg

In January of 1998 I wrote a synod newsletter article about an on-going concern. I had written about it a couple years before, but prompted by continuing issues relative to the concern and an article in the Lutheran that same month, I felt a need to address it once again. The concern has to do with the need for former pastors to refrain from performing pastoral acts or exercising any kind of influence in a congregation where they are no longer called to serve. The time has come to again speak to this matter.

Much of what I share now is the same or similar to what I shared in 1998. My hope is that lay leaders who read this article will be sensitive to the matter. It is expected that ordained pastors will be, but that has not always been the case. Pastors who do not follow guidelines with respect to this matter can create great difficulty for current pastors. Lay leaders or parishioners who are not aware of potential problems may put the current pastor into no-win situations. None of this helps the ministry of a congregation.

The Lutheran article referred to above focused attention on the need for closure when a pastor no longer is serving a parish he or she formerly served. That pastor should not perform any pastoral acts or exercise any influence over ministry in congregations previously served. Article S14.14 of the Synod Constitution states: *Ordained ministers shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council.*

Just say no is the best policy whenever asked to do anything of a pastoral nature in a former congregation. This policy is for pastors who move away and also for those pastors who remain in a community where they were involved in pastoral ministry. When asked if one is willing to do any form of pastoral ministry, never put the current pastor into the no-win situation by saying, "If it's OK with your current pastor." You, as a former pastor, are the one to say "no" from the beginning. If the request is for something like a wedding or baptism of a family member, a

confidential conversation between you and the current pastor should be where a decision is made about appropriateness. If the pastor is not comfortable with your involvement, you must be the one to say "no" without reference to the conversation. Obviously there are times when former pastors are invited to preach, preside, or to speak at special occasions such as congregation anniversaries. Such requests (after consultation with the current pastor) can be honored.

This is a much larger issue than many would expect. I continue to be made aware of congregations where former pastors are creating problems through exercising a pastoral presence or engaging in pastoral acts in the congregation or community. It is not to be done for the sake of the ministry of the congregation and the pastoral leadership of the current pastor.

In a somewhat different but related matter, retired pastors who have become members of new congregations must be careful so as not to exert too much leadership which could be seen as pastoral simply because one is a retired pastor. As a retired ordained pastor there likely could be some requests from the current pastor to do pastoral ministry. In most situations this is entirely proper and strengthens ministry. On the other hand, there are those few situations when the actions and strongly felt presence of a retired pastor can become problematic. A retired pastor is not the pastor of a congregation where he or she is a member. Care and consideration for the current pastoral leadership must be practiced. A retired pastor living in the community where he or she was a called pastor must also refrain from doing pastoral acts in the community, privately or publicly.

As pastors and lay leaders, please keep this important matter of pastoral ethics ever before you, and do everything you can to uphold and honor the guide-

Retired Pastors Who Stay: Some Ethical Thoughts

Should retired pastors stay in the parish they last served, or should pastors leave those parishes at retirement? "Boundary" and role issues, gleaned from misconduct concerns, are relevant to these questions.

"Should retired pastors stay in the parish served, or should the pastor leave that parish at retirement?" asked *The Lutheran* magazine (Jan. 25, 1998, p. 40):

"Retired pastors should leave" was the response, "because relationships would be too confusing."

A reader responded with a letter to the editor in the following month's issue saying: "The pastor should stay, because former pastors need the care of the community recently served."

While there will not be one answer that satisfies all, I believe there are at least three important ethical principles to be considered when such a question is raised that are parallel with principles associated with sexual misconduct.

In particular, I am inspired by Karen Lebacqz, and Ronald G. Barton's excellent book entitled *Sex in the Parish* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991),¹ and Roland Capp's 1993 article: "Sex in the Parish: Social

Scientific Explanations for Why it Occurs"²

The underlying concern for a pastor staying in a parish served has to do with boundary issues and the role of the pastor. The underlying anxiety is that a former pastor of a parish may interfere and unduly influence members in opposition to the current pastor.

While such concerns and anxieties may not be fairly placed on all retired pastors who stay, there are numerous examples where such concerns and



To celebrate the Light of
the World, may we suggest
the Candle of the Century?

For 100 years, the exquisite craftsmanship and
timeless quality of Cathedral Candles have made ours
the preferred candles for churches everywhere.
So, as we celebrate our second century, remember
to celebrate all of your religious occasions with the
candle that still outshines the rest. Call today.



Cathedral Candles available through
Augsburg Fortress

1-800-328-4648

MODERN SPIRITUAL MASTERS SERIES

Essentials of the great spiritual writers of our century, introduced by leading authors.



DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Introduction by Robert Coles
1-57075-194-3 128pp. pbk \$13.00

HENRI NOUWEN

Introduction by Robert A. Jonas
1-57075-197-8 160pp. pbk \$14.00

SIMONE WEIL

Introduction by Eric Springsted
1-57075-204-4 144pp. pbk \$13.00

TRADITIONS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY SERIES

Ancient ways and their meaning for the spiritual seeker today.



BRIDES IN THE DESERT

The Spirituality of the Beguines
by Saskia Murk Jansen

1-57075-201-X 136 pp. pbk \$13.00

THE WAY OF SIMPLICITY

The Cistercian Tradition

by Esther de Waal

1-57075-195-1 176 pp. pbk \$14.00

PRAYER AND COMMUNITY

The Benedictine Tradition

by Columba Stewart

1-57075-219-2 136 pp. pbk \$13.00

MYSTICISM AND PROPHECY

The Dominican Tradition

by Richard Woods

1-57075-206-0 168 pp. pbk \$14.00



ORBIS BOOKS

Maryknoll, New York 10545

Through your bookstore or direct (MC/VISA)
1-800-258-5838 Dept. SPI

anxieties are justified.

While sexual violation concerns are not fairly placed upon all pastors, there are numerous examples where such concerns and anxieties are justified to the point of requiring pastors to receive training in these issues.

Just as in prevention of sexual misconduct the pastor is responsible for maintaining appropriate boundaries, the retired and staying pastor has similar responsibilities to maintain appropriate boundaries and roles in relationships without giving cause for justified anxiety.

An Illustration

George is a retired pastor who has stayed in the parish he formerly served. He consistently refused to do funerals, weddings, and baptisms in the parish. When told of someone who was ill, George insisted that the called pastor be informed.

A significant vote came before the congregation 20 years after his retirement. George discreetly, yet actively, sought to influence the congregation against the called pastor. When George was confronted by the called pastor, he denied campaigning against the called pastor.

Later George sent word to the called pastor, through another, that he was entitled to his opinion and that he was no different from anyone else in the parish.

As time passed, George publicly expressed dismay as to why members of the parish gave him a cold shoulder and seemed so unforgiving of him.

The Principle of Power

The first principle, and a most fundamental one for considering the ethic of a pastor staying, has to do with the nature of clergy power.

In the above story, George holds a perception that many pastors, both retired and current, have today: I am an ordinary member of a parish with no special power.

Pastors tend not to perceive their vocation endowing much, if any, power. The lack of perception or personal experience of power does not exclude the fact that pastors do have extraordinary power. The role of pastor, and of being a predecessor pastor, carries many forms of power.

Lebeque and Barton have demonstrated that pastors acquire

power because of the functions and roles they fulfill (and fulfilled).³ Peter Rueter makes similar points in his writing on the same topic (*Sex in the Forbidden Zone*).⁴

Lebeque and Barton lists the kinds of power pastors possess and potentially misuse as:

The power of freedom—without continued supervision by and accountability to others,

The power of access and accessibility—having privileged access to others,

The power of knowledge—knowing a great deal of personal information about others.

The role of pastor does create an inequality of power between pastor and parishioner. The courts recognize this. The misuse of these kinds of power is a basis for legitimate lawsuits against those who have sex with a parishioner. To be unaware of the power one has fails to negate the presence of power, and makes a person vulnerable to crossing boundaries that should not be crossed.

George, in the above story, is an example of the misuse of power. He did not acknowledge that he had used his greater power to influence a congregational decision. In this case, his power was granted to him by years of faithful ministry to many parishioners and by his having privileged access to many ears.

The fact he could not acknowledge, or own, his power and said instead that he was "an ordinary member of that parish" is a clue that his view of his power, and his conduct, was amiss. He did not say, "I am using my greater power to influence this vote" because to do so would admit his behavior violated commonly held standards of conduct.

Predecessors, it is commonly thought, should stop trying to run their former parishes.

Sometimes called pastors will use the predecessor's support to gain congregational affirmation for a special project. Is this wrong? Is the called pastor willing to risk that the same dynamic can be used for ill? When the called pastor seeks support from a retired pastor who stays, is the called pastor improperly tempting the retired pastor to exercise power, or seek further power, that offering support may endow?

It also goes without saying that for-

Guidelines for Retired Pastors Adopted

The ELCA Church Council approved guidelines regarding several issues related to retired pastors at their Nov. 13-16, 1998 meeting in Chicago.

The guidelines refer to roster issues and congregational membership following retirement, as well as matters involving pastoral service, interim ministry, and compensation.

The ELCA's Division for Ministry drafted the guidelines, which state that retired pastors "are not only to be honored for their past service but are seen as important resources for ministry within the life of the church."

The text can be obtained by contacting one's synod office. The Division for Ministry is planning to develop a resource based on the guidelines.

mer pastors should no longer perform pastoral acts in the parish once served. To do so is to garner power such acts give to the pastor (the power of respect and access) and undercuts the called pastor's ministry. It is surprising that many retired pastors do not see anything wrong with doing this!

Some retired pastors will point out how difficult it is because "we are not listened to, or valued, as we once were." This is indeed a painful experience. Unfortunately this concern raises the question: Do pastors need to exert power to make themselves feel power no longer experienced or denied to them?

Some predecessors may be unaware of an inability to release long held visions, particularly if change threatens these hopes. The temptation to influence may be irresistible. For some, the better option is to leave that parish altogether (Mt. 5:29).

The principle of power is why cler-

gy and their denominations, are sued today when clergy have sex with parishioners. The courts recognize that a clergyperson has power that the parishioner does not have. Retired pastors also have power and this power can be, and unfortunately is, misused.

The Principle of Co-Dependency

The second principle has to do with a pastor's vulnerability to co-dependency. Pastoral ministry, by its very nature, is susceptible to co-dependency.⁵ Generally speaking, pastors are people who care very deeply. As a result clergy easily overestimates their (our) importance in an organization's, or in people's, lives (Roman 12:3).

The caring pastor falls into compromising situations with a mistaken belief that his/her love is what the other, or the organization, needs. In fact, care is available from others. This is the surprising nature of the miracle of God's Spirit. The body of Christ in today's world is larger than an individual or a congregation. Love is a gift for and a fruit of the entire body of believers.⁶

This is what is troubling about the

reader's response to *The Lutheran* magazine article cited in the opening. The rebuttal was that a pastor needs the care afforded by relationships built over years of mutual ministry/care.

Indeed, people do need care from each other. However, the expression of care easily becomes flawed when surrounded by a mistaken belief that care comes only in a specific situation, or from a specific person.

Retired pastors who stay, and congregations who encourage them to stay, are particularly vulnerable to perpetuating an unhealthy co-dependency by over-reliance upon one another.

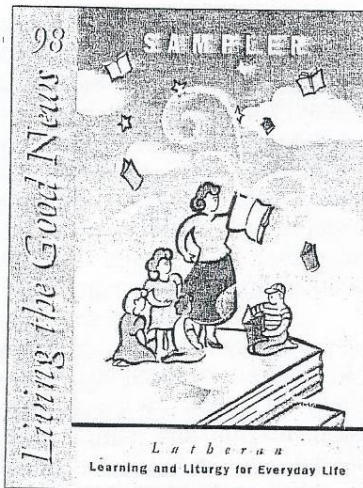
This principle is another reason why former pastors should not perform pastoral acts in the parish they once served. The bond of love and respect can and should be expressed in ways that are not reflective of a role one has surrendered. Love should be expressed in ways other than by duplicating a former role as the only and best way.

Even Christ had to let go of his former role by going the way of the cross. Love does not insist on its own way (1 Cor. 13). Love is kept small by the mistaken belief that others cannot fulfill

Lutheran Lectionary-based Program

"Our Sunday School teachers like *Living the Good News*, not only because it's lectionary-based, but because there's plenty to do and the lesson plans are concise, clear and easy to follow."

Julie Schulte
Central Lutheran Church
Elk River, MN



- ▲ A curriculum based on the Lutheran readings
- ▲ Provides a creative road map for teaching that enables everyone to discover and experience God's word
- ▲ Enriches the gathering of God's people at worship through the study of lessons based on each Sunday's scripture reading
- ▲ Links learning and worship with everyday life for all ages, preschool through adult
- ▲ Convenient, well-organized and easy-to-use



Living the Good News, Inc.
a division of The Morehouse Group

CALL TODAY
1-800-824-1813
for your Free Sampler

Please use source code LP

roles (1 Cor. 12) they have been called to (i.e., the new pastor as the officiant).

I find myself wondering if inappropriate outcomes are part of the risk of staying. To stay in a parish, and to express opinions, is to perpetuate one's own vision and limitations and potentially hamper a new work of the Spirit.

The Principle of Scapegoating

The third principle has to do with the sociological nature of scapegoating. Scapegoating occurs when the sin of the community is placed upon a person who bears the sins of all and is sacrificed on behalf of the community.⁷ Parishes and denominations will blame a pastor rather than confront and change their own complicity in inappropriate behavior.

Pastors are particularly vulnerable to being scapegoated in a parish with a beloved former pastor. Rather than confront the congregation's own dysfunctional (co-dependent) behavior, organizations such as a congregation will allow the retired pastor to subvert the called pastor. Few parishes are will-

ing to formally stand up to a retired pastor who stays and strays by undercutting the called pastor.

Instead of taking a formal stance against the staying and straying former pastor, indirect and unclear messages will be given. We see this in the cited case as George was puzzled by the cold reception from others and a perceived lack of forgiveness.

Too often the task of giving clear messages about the inappropriate behavior of a staying and straying pastor is left to the bishop, or to the called pastor, both of whom can become ideal scapegoats. If parishioners directly confront a retired pastor, these people too easily become labeled as uncaring, are scapegoated, and the real problems are not addressed.

Sometimes scapegoating is done by denominational executives in the way that support is offered to, or withheld from, the called parish pastor. When a former pastor improperly influences a vote of a congregation (see cited case), that person is generally immune from formal action and seldom is disciplined.

The Rest of the Story

As in most difficult situations, there is not one common solution to the issue.

Some pastors leave the community served at retirement and issues of staying never have to be addressed. While some pastors stay and stray, others stay and never stray. When a pastor does stay and stray, there is an ethical violation that can be informed, I have argued, by being reminded of common principles used to prevent sexual misconduct.

Both staying and straying pastors and issues of sexual misconduct have to do with a collapse of boundaries that have devastating effects.

I do not argue, or seek to suggest, parity in depth of wounding resulting from sexual misconduct and retired pastors who stay and stray. Nevertheless, there is a spiritual and emotional wounding of people caused by a staying and straying pastor.

Unfortunately, such wounding is seldom attended to by the church because there is inadequate acknowledgment of the pain, except to say to the effect: Isn't that horrible what happened?

I would like to see others also develop an ethic of what should happen between pastor and congregation when a pastor retires or even resigns. I believe that these ethical issues should be presented and discussed at pre-retirement events. Ways need to be found to help clarify for both pastor and congregation a clearer understanding about the new relationship between the two.

Larry W. Spielman is senior pastor at Grace Lutheran Church, Cleveland Heights, Ohio. He has also served congregations in California.

Endnotes

1. *Sex in the Parish* by Karen Lebacqz and Ronald G. Barton (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).
2. "Sex in the Parish: Social Scientific Explanations for Why It Occurs" by Roland Capp (*The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 47 [4], pp. 358-360).
3. *Ibid.*, Lebacqz and Barton, pp. 93ff.
4. *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*, by Peter Reuter (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher Inc., 1989).
5. *Ibid.*, Lebacqz and Barton, pp. 75ff.
6. For a thoughtful discussion of a parish as a closed system of support, see the Capps' article.
7. *Ibid.*, Capps.

A Gathering of Different Lights

Let your light shine through the graduate degree programs at the School of Theology and Ministry's Institute for Ecumenical Theological Studies and the Institute for Catholic Theological Studies.

Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies

Master of Arts in Transforming Spirituality

Master of Divinity



For more information, contact:
School of Theology and Ministry
900 Broadway, Seattle, WA 98122-4340
(206) 296-5330

E-mail: stm@seattleu.edu
www.seattleu.edu/theomin/