

NORTHUMBERLAND PRESBYTERY

APPLICATION FOR HONORABLE RETIREMENT

NAME: _____

ADDRESS, CITY, STATE: _____

PHONE: _____ CELL: _____ email: _____

DATE OF ANTICIPATED RETIREMENT: _____

LAST DATE IN THE PULPIT: _____

PLEASE INDICATE BY CHECKING THE BOXES WHAT YOU HAVE DONE:

- RECEIVED THE RETIREMENT PACKET FROM THE BOARD OF PENSIONS
- NOTIFIED THE STATED CLERK OR EXECUTIVE PRESBYTERY OF ANTICIPATED RETIREMENT
- NOTIFIED THE SESSION OF ANTICIPATED RETIREMENT

Please list all the churches you were installed as a Pastor or Associate or co-pastor and the Dates or Served as a Missionary or institution of the wider church.

NAME OF CHURCH	CITY AND STATE	DATES

PLEASE LIST THE COMMITTEES/COMMISSIONS YOU SERVED ON AS A PCUSA PASTOR

NORTHUMBERLAND PRESBYTERY

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Please list any offices you have held including Commissioners to GA or Synod and the year Served

Please list the degrees you have earned or certificates you have received

Degree or Certificates	College or Seminary	Year

Please list any special recognitions or awards you have received:

I Have read and will abide by the Retirement guidelines of Northumberland Presbytery

Signature: - _____

For my symbol of retirement, I prefer the following: choose one

- A Shepherds Staff An Acrylic Plaque

APPROVED BY THE COM: YES / NO	DATE: _____
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Guidelines for Retired Ministers and Their Former Congregations

When a pastor leaves a charge, there are bonds of affection between the minister and members of the church, which continue to be cherished. Relations of friendship continue but the pastoral relationship does not. The Presbytery of Northumberland recognizes that there are potentially difficult situations involving the relationship of a minister to his or her former congregation. The Committee on Ministry provides this guideline as a means of assisting both pastors and congregations in avoiding awkward situations, maintaining the church's ethical standards, and encouraging new pastoral relationships that will be established. The particular focus of this guideline is the relationship of ministers with congregations at the time of their retirement, and the relationship of retired ministers with congregations formerly served.

The General Assembly (1998) adopted a Professional Code of Ethics which contains the paper, "Life Together in the Community of Faith: Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers of the Presbyterian Church (USA)." It contains three rubrics, one of which is "I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry. Therefore I will: (among its seventeen implications are these)

- Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry.
- Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor.
- Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery.
- Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery, and provide pastoral services to members of another congregation only with the consent of their pastors.
- Consult with the Committee on Ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.

The ending of a pastoral relationship sometimes is a trying and traumatic experience and it always means change in the life of the pastor and his or her family and also of the congregation. When a pastor leaves a church, he or she leaves not only a professional relationship, but also an emotional and communal support group as well as personal friends. Beyond that, some will have developed emotional ties...good old pastor X married us and baptized our children. Pastor X conducted Dad's funeral (and we want [expect] him or her to conduct Mother's funeral. The result is that often these deep relationships and emotional ties overlap into the ministry of the new pastor. The problem that evolves has to do with leaving what is past and allowing a congregation to move into its future. With a new minister, the congregation and individuals have new expectations and hopes for the future but they also have a degree of sadness and nostalgia at the leaving of a pastor. Working out this transition period in a loving and ethical manner requires sensitivity and awareness from both the congregation and the retiring pastor. Sometimes violations of pastoral courtesy are purely innocent, arising out of response to an immediate need, or out of the naiveté of either the minister or the session of the previously served church, or the person making a request of a former minister. In some cases, it is a combination of these factors. There are other instances where a deep and abiding friendship is the source of the request. Then, there are those who simply cannot "let go."

It is important that the departing pastor make it clear that the pastoral relationship will come to an end. This does not mean that friendships must come to an end. Friendships are priceless and are to be preserved, but there is a special responsibility on the part of the departing pastor to prevent friendships from becoming confused with the pastoral relationship. And there is a special responsibility of the congregation to respect the ending of the pastoral relationship.

Retirement Interview with the Committee on Ministry

Coming to retirement is a special time in the life of the minister and the presbytery of which he or she is a part. This is recognized by the presbytery in a service of celebration as part of a stated meeting. However, The Committee on Ministry also wants to know what wisdom and perspective you have to share concerning the church you have been serving and also how you foresee your relationship with that church. The following questions will be part of a retirement interview with the Committee on Ministry:

1. As you conclude this important phase of your ministry and come to the time of retirement, what would you like to say to edify the Church? What issues, stories and histories do you feel will influence its future?
2. Recognizing that one's commitment to ministry is life-long, commensurate with one's ordination vows, what do you anticipate will be the shape and form of you ministry in retirement?
3. What will be the relationship between you and congregations formerly served that will enhance the work of your successor?

General Guidelines for Relationship between a Former Pastor and his or her Congregation

1. Affirming the value of absence, a departing pastor should seek to find a new church home whenever possible. (Obviously this is easier in a city where there is more than one Presbyterian Church.)
2. If relating to another church is impractical or impossible, a former pastor should limit his or her activity and seek to redefine his or her role in that particular church. If the pastor and his/her family wish to continue a relationship with the congregation it is the policy of Northumberland Presbytery that the retired pastor and his/her family separate themselves for a period of at least one year following the installation of the new pastor. This gives the new pastor the opportunity to establish his or her ministry. Exceptions to this policy can be made by a written request from the retired minister in conjunction with the session and current pastor to Committee on Ministry.
3. A former pastor should firmly, but in a positive and caring way, tell the congregation that he or she will not participate in a leadership role in any activity or special services in the church.
4. A former pastor and family continuing to live in the community will have many personal ties. It is appropriate and necessary that those relationships continue. It is incumbent upon that former pastor and family to refrain zealously from discussing the church, changes that are taking place, and other items of church life. This will be especially important to guard in informal settings.
5. The *Book of Order* allows for the former pastor to participate in weddings, funerals and baptisms after the date of dissolution **only by invitation of the session and the moderator**. A departing pastor should have as his or her first concern the impact this participation would have on the quality of the relationship between the current or future pastor and the life and ministry of the congregation.
6. Any desire on the part of members of the congregation for the departing pastor to participate in congregational life or services should be discussed not with the departing

- pastor, but with the interim pastor or subsequent installed pastor.
7. Normally, invitations to the departing pastor to be part of the worshiping or fellowship life of the congregation should not occur until the installed pastor has had an opportunity to establish relationships with the congregation.
 8. With the guidance of the COM, the Session needs to be firm in declaring to the people that former pastors may not participate in a leadership role in the church.
 9. With the guidance of the COM, the Session needs to set the guidelines for the departing pastor and assist him or her in interpreting them to the congregation and to the community.
 10. The Committee on Ministry welcomes and encourages consultation with former pastors or with sessions should questions or concerns arise.

Sample Letters for Transition at the Time of Retirement

1. SAMPLE LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION FROM THE PASTOR

My Dear Friends,

As our official relationship as Pastor and Congregation draws to a close, I want to share with you my hope. In the past ___ years that I have been your Pastor we have shared many special moments. There have been those special good times...the babies...weddings...picnics and other fun activities. There have also been those times of sharing sorrow, with hospital and nursing home visits and funerals of loved ones.

My retirement includes handing those pastoral responsibilities on to another because I want to give the new pastor a lot of space to develop his or her own ministry. I remember how I felt when I was the new pastor and how my predecessor gave me the opportunity to develop new, personal ties with the congregation by staying in the background giving me moral support.

So, when you have need of the pastor's service, call the new pastor. If your daughter is getting married, and I'm invited, I'll be rejoicing with you...and I'll offer my help by making our spare bedroom available for some of your out of town guests...or by offering to go to the airport to pick up guests... but the new pastor will be planning the wedding, counseling the kids, and performing the service.

I'll still see you at Rotary Club, continue in the bridge group, and see you at church league softball games and High School football games...but, when we meet...don't ask me what I think about the new pastor or the session's latest project. I'd appreciate knowing that someone is sick, and Suzy is graduating from college with honors and other joys and concerns within the church family, but not other business.

Together, let's continue our concerned relationship, but please help me stay out of church business.

Love,

Pastor _____, Honorably Retired

2. SAMPLE LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION FROM THE SESSION

Objectives to be accomplished in a letter from the Session to the congregation:

- To make a pastoral response affirming the ministry of the pastor.
- To validate the boundaries established and stated for the future relationship of pastor and congregation.
- To relate next steps in the process.
- To affirm the church's leadership in the future.

TO: The Congregation of ----- Presbyterian Church

FROM: The Session

As of _____, John/Jane Doe will no longer be the Pastor of our church. His/Her ministry here has been well received and many close ties and friendships have been forged. We cherish them and hope they may continue.

The Session of the church is charged with leading the church into new relationships. For a period of time, while the church, through a Pastor Nominating Committee seeks a new pastor for the congregation, an Interim Pastor/Supply Pastor will serve us.

Part of the reason for an Interim Pastor/Supply Pastor is to provide for the managing of the church's business, worship and spiritual life. It also serves as a kind of a bridge from what has been in the life of our church, to what our ministry in the future will be.

We're aware of the letter you've received from Pastor John/Jane, asking for your help in allowing him/her really to retire. We, as your Session, also ask you to help the church move from what has been into our next phase of ministry. Please support us by cherishing what is past while working for today and tomorrow. Please allow our Interim Pastor/Supply Pastor, and the Installed Pastor, who will follow, to become your pastor.

Remember, roles are changing. John/Jane will continue to be your friend, but others now must take over the pastoral roles and duties. We hope you will help make this transition a positive experience by supporting the Session during this important time.

Sincerely yours;

For the Session
_____, Clerk

3. SAMPLE LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION & SESSION FROM THE PRESBYTERY

TO: The Session & Congregation of ----- Presbyterian Church

FROM: The Presbytery of Northumberland

We greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We share with you the transition that is taking place as your Pastor, John/Jane Doe, retires. His/Her ministry among you has been appreciated and admired by the Presbytery of Northumberland.

Many new things will be happening as this transition takes place. Be assured that the Presbytery is here to help and support you. During the period of change, we ask the Session to be diligent in seeing that the retiring pastor is allowed full retirement and relieved of having to respond to congregation members with special needs.

At the same time we encourage the Session to provide for continuity and a positive continuing ministry through the use of an Interim Pastor/Supply Pastor and that the congregation give the Interim Pastor/Supply Pastor full support by welcoming his or her talents and experience to meet their personal and family pastoral needs.

Through the Committee on Ministry, the Session will be apprized of persons available to serve you in this time as Interim Pastor/Supply Pastor.

The Committee on Ministry has appointed Elder _____ to offer you particular help and assistance during this time. Elder _____ has been specifically trained to answer your questions about the process of seeking a new pastor as you move from Pastor Doe's ministry into the future.

As you ponder your future, Elder _____ can assist you in claiming the uniqueness of your ministry at _____ Presbyterian Church and begin to consider the pastoral skills needed to help the congregation own its vision and fulfill its own ministry goals.

The Presbytery will be there with a lot of assistance in the search for the pastoral candidate with just the right skills. Elder _____ will be there with and for you as this exciting process takes place. Feel free to contact him at any time with your questions and needs.

Sincerely yours,

Wm. K. Knudsen, Executive Presbyter: Pastor to the Presbytery
_____, Chair; Committee on Ministry

cc: Elder _____