

COM HANDBOOK

(SECTION 4)

Exit interview models

Exit interview with the departing pastor or departing interim pastor

The liaison or team of persons from the COM should conduct an exit interview with the departing pastor soon after the pastor announces his/her departure. The exit interview helps provide closure for the pastor and family. It also provides information that may be helpful to the COM as it works with the congregation during its search.

1. Ask the pastor to talk about things she/he feels good about their work with the congregation.
2. Ask about barriers to effective ministry. These barriers might be in the congregation, or community, or the pastor.
3. Ask about the relationship between the pastor and session.
4. Ask about advice they might give to the next pastor.
5. Talk about appropriate and inappropriate contact with the congregation after the pastor, associate pastor or other staff person has left. This is important. It is especially important if the pastor is staying in town or moving to a nearby location. The *Book of Order* says “Former pastors, associate pastors, and ministers who do not have a pastoral relationship with the particular church as defined in this chapter may officiate at services for members of the church, or at services within its properties, only upon invitation from the moderator of the session or, in case of the inability to contact the moderator, from the clerk of session (G-14.0630 Officiate by Invitation Only).”

Exit interview with the session

It is best to conduct the exit interview with the session after the pastoral relationship has been dissolved. The interview helps the congregation begin to disengage from the pastor. The Moderator of session appointed by presbytery should be present for this interview.

1. Discuss positive growth in the life of the congregation during the pastor’s time with the congregation.
2. Discuss any difficulties there might have been in the relationship between the pastor and session/congregation.
3. Discuss ways the session might build a strong relationship with the next pastor.
4. Discuss appropriate and inappropriate contact with the congregation after the pastor has left. This is important. See (5) above.
5. Plan ways the session might lead the congregation to disengage with the former pastor, associate or other staff person.
6. Give a brief overview of the call process.
7. Begin discussion about maintaining regular worship and congregational life during the transition and search for new pastoral leadership.
8. Discuss the benefits of the session appointing a transition team consisting of session members and significant members of the congregation.