



*Presbytery of the Cascades*

245 S. Bancroft St., Suite D

Portland, OR 97239

503.227.5486

[www.cascadespresbytery.org](http://www.cascadespresbytery.org)

## **Separation Ethics**

**Adopted by presbytery: November 14, 1998; Updated by COM-CC: August, 2011**

**Revised: July, 2015**

Ending a pastoral relationship can be a trying and traumatic experience for both the pastor and the members of the congregation and community which the pastor has served. This is especially true when the presbytery, for cause, takes the initiative to dissolve a pastoral relationship. In all cases, it is imperative to provide space for the graceful work of the Holy Spirit during the interim times and new times. In this endeavor the departing pastor is responsible for observing appropriate ethical standards. A congregation must be free, in all respects, to develop new pastoral leadership, both during an interim period and then in a new permanent pastoral relationship.

### **The Responsibility of the Departing Pastor**

When a pastor accepts a call to a ministry at some distance from the congregation served, opportunities for contact with members of the former congregation are likely to be limited or non-existent. Experience suggests that a teaching elder who ends a pastoral relationship with a congregation ought to move from the community in which he or she has served, but this is not always possible. When a pastor remains nearby, it is especially important that the wisdom of separation ethics be observed so that the new pastor and congregation will be able to form new pastoral relationships. During the time between the announcement of the request for the dissolution of the pastoral relationship and the pastor's departure from the particular church, the pastor is to make it clear (both by written communication and in personal conversations) that the pastoral relationship is to end on a particular date and that it is the responsibility of the presbytery and the officers of the particular church to guide that congregation's life and work after the pastor leaves. The departing pastor is to make clear the following ethical standards required of departing and former pastors: Broadly speaking, it is ethically inappropriate for the departing pastor to have any role or function or influence upon the life of the church after the date of the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. Specifically,

- a. All pastoral and professional relationships and responsibilities with the congregation are to end as of the effective date of the dissolution.
- b. The pastor, whether in a temporary or permanent called position, will not be involved in any way in the selection process of the subsequent pastor or pastors.
- c. The pastor, whether in a temporary or permanent called position, will not become engaged in conversations which may in any way offer opinions or criticisms about the life of the congregation or the performance of subsequent pastor or pastors.
- d. Any participation in the life or services of the congregation is ordinarily inappropriate. Any involvement may be only with the guidance and consent of the appropriate COM and at the request of the new pastor.

A pastor who has departed from a formal relationship with a particular congregation, whether that relationship was temporary or permanent, is to understand, affirm, and inform members that:

- a. Personal relations of friendship are to be affirmed and may continue, but are not to be confused with the pastoral relationship which has ended.
- b. Requests for pastoral ministries, such as calling, counseling, officiating at weddings or funerals or baptisms are inappropriate and will be refused as a matter of professional ethics, and
- c. Discussion of, or offering of, opinions about the particular church, its pastoral leadership, its officers, or its current health and ministries is unethical except as described in "d" below.

- d.** A former pastor may discuss his/her former congregation with possible candidates for a pastoral ministry at that church, but is not to take the initiative in suggesting candidates for the position which s/he has vacated.
- e.** It is wise for a pastor to encourage his/her family to practice the same separation ethics.

The Responsibility of the Newly-called Pastor Experience has shown that a newly called pastor may find that developing a relationship with a former pastor who is still in the area may enhance the ministry to the congregation. Having a conversation about the congregation may assist in the beginning of a new chapter of ministry. In time, the former pastor might be asked to assist in some pastoral duties; usually this would be after the new pastor's first year of ministry to the congregation, in order for the new pastoral relationships to be formed. Specifically, this works best when the former pastor and his or her family follow the guidelines of separation ethics until the new pastor feels it is time to contact the former pastor. The former pastor should relate to his or her former congregation only at the invitation and supervision of the new pastor, and with approval from the COM.

**Please see next page for Sign Off Form**



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## Separation Ethics Sign-off Form

### Presbytery of the Cascades

TO: All Members of the Presbytery of the Cascades

FROM: Stated Clerk

RE: Separation Ethics

The Presbytery of the Cascades adopted at its November, 1998 meeting, the “**Separation Ethics**” which specifies standards of conduct for Ministers of the Word and Sacrament when they leave a particular parish situation.

These Separation Ethics apply to all who are ordained as Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. It is important that all who are subject to the Separation Ethics read them, acknowledge receipt of the ethical standards, and formally consent to being bound by the presbytery’s discipline in these matters.

**Please complete the form below and email it to the presbytery office:** [office@POTC.life](mailto:office@POTC.life)

I have received a copy, have read it, understand it, and acknowledge that the “Separation Ethics” as adopted by the Presbytery of the Cascades, November 1998, and revised July, 2015, apply to me.

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Signature

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Printed Name

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Street Address

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City, State, Zip

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Email Address

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Date