

Best Practices for Healthy Leaving

1. Whether the leaving of the pastor is done under good circumstances or bad, the ministry of that pastor should be celebrated.
2. Using rituals in worship for releasing one another (pastor and congregation) is very healing and honors the spiritual richness of transition.
3. Setting boundaries between the pastor who is leaving and the congregation is essential to ultimate health.
4. The pastor should make very clear opportunities for congregants to say good- bye through one on one appointments as well as in groups.
5. The board should attend to some important things:
 - a. Contact OCLH and begin the partnership right away
 - b. Review with the pastor any specific contractual things that need to be clarified and honored (i.e. vacation time, health benefits, etc.)
 - c. Decide whether a gift will be given to the pastor and how the congregation can be involved in that process.
 - d. Work with the pastor and OCLH to fill the pulpit for a month or two beyond the pastor's departure.
 - e. Provide a clear list of things the pastor needs to attend to before departure (i.e. turning in keys, providing passwords, cleaning out office, leaving all mailing lists, etc.)
6. Once a pastor resigns, the LONGEST time interval before leaving should be 2 months. Long enough is important, too long is damaging.
7. If the leaving is complicated, full of conflict, the result of letting the pastor go rather than a resignation, or a vote of the congregation to remove the pastor has occurred, then a plan should be put together right away to move through this process in a way that will be healthy for the congregation.