



The Florida Conference of  
The United Methodist Church

Cabinet Policy  
on

Departing/Retired Pastors and Where They Attend Church

In *The Book of Worship of The United Methodist Church*, there is an “Order of Farewell to a Pastor or Deacon.” That liturgy reads in part:

**Pastor:** I thank you, the members and friends..., for the love and support you have shown me while I have ministered among you.  
I am grateful for the ways my leadership has been accepted.  
I ask forgiveness for the mistakes I have made.  
As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here....

**People:** We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness,  
and accept that you now leave to minister elsewhere/retire.  
We express our gratitude for your time among us.  
We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes.  
Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave with your departure.

**Pastor:** I accept your gratitude and forgiveness, and I forgive you,  
trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.  
I release you from turning to me and depending on me.  
I encourage your continuing ministry here and will pray for you and for your new pastor/deacon.

This liturgy encourages us to have good boundaries for missional reasons. It helps us to understand that our ministry is always just a season in the life of a church and that new seasons are important. It also helps us to realize that God is not dependent on us and is always at work raising up others to come behind us and continue the journey. It also recognizes that our successors deserve to have an opportunity to get to know their new congregation unhindered by our presence.

Accordingly, the Bishop and Cabinet of the Florida Annual Conference make the following policy regarding departing/retiring pastors and where they attend church:

1. Departing/retiring pastors and their families will not return to the church they last served for at least 12 months following their leaving the charge.
2. Toward the end of the initial 12 month-period following the pastor’s departure/retirement, if the pastor and/or family desires to worship at their last charge, they will meet with the district superintendent and the current pastor to create a binding covenant to set appropriate boundaries. It is generally assumed that the retired/departed pastor will defer to the currently serving pastor in all situations. The district superintendent will review the covenant, may amend the covenant and has the final approval based on missional reasons.
3. Exceptions to this policy will be granted by a district superintendent for missional reasons and only upon request.

*Approved by the Appointive Cabinet  
March, 2018*