

### 13. GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGIAL RELATIONS AMONG MINISTERS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The rules of ministerial relationships have, for the most part, been unwritten. These guidelines are presented for the purpose of maintaining integrity in the practice of ministry.

1. Speech And Conduct: Like all Christians, ministers should try to shape their speech and conduct so that it is patterned after Paul's counsel to think about whatever is honorable, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy of praise. Acting as God's Servants, they should speak the truth in love. They should use understanding, tact, and discretion, with a sense of respect for all people, a spirit of fairness and decency, and a concern for the Christian community. Their motives should be honest and sincere in desiring to build up the body of Christ. In speaking of fellow ministers, it should be remembered that making disparaging statements is destructive of the peace, unity, and purity of the Church. At all times, Ministers of the Word and Sacrament should strive to share faith, hope, and love in all their relationships.
2. Services For Members Of Another Church: A minister who is called upon to officiate at a wedding, funeral, or baptism for families who are not members of one's own congregation, should ascertain whether they are members of a different church. If they are members of another congregation, they should be urged to procure the services of their own pastor. If that effort fails, the minister should seek to inform their pastor regarding this request and explain the circumstances prior to acting.
3. Calling On Members Of Neighboring Churches: The first responsibility of pastors is to their own flock, and they should concentrate in their calling on the members of their own congregation. They should not call upon persons who are members of another church unless the initiative and interest shown by such persons require it as a courtesy.
4. Multiple Staff Relationships: In staff relationships, as in all intra-church relationships, the objective is to work together with a spirit of cooperation in building up the whole Church. To this end, the ministers should be understanding for one another, accept each other as persons, respect each other's competencies, offer constructive suggestions to one another, forgive misunderstandings, and be tolerant of differences of opinion and style of operation.  
  
A staff person should not aspire to succeed any other person on the staff. Innuendo and gossip should be avoided. Staff members should be encouraged to speak openly and frankly to each other about their differences. Loyal support between members of the staff is a tremendous help toward building a good team. This is as true for parish associates as for other staff.
5. When A Minister Leaves A Parish: When the relationship between a minister and a church is dissolved, the minister should publicly announce that he or she will no longer be available for pastoral services to the members of that church. Thereafter, the minister should fulfill that announced intention by resolutely declining all requests from members of that church to conduct baptisms, weddings, funerals, and other pastoral offices for them. A former pastor, associate pastor, or interim pastor may be called upon for services upon invitation of the present pastor; however, they should not seek or encourage such invitation, but should seek instead to strengthen the ties between the former flock and their present shepherd. During the interim before a pastor is called, they may be called upon to conduct ministerial services. If there is an interim pastor, the same courtesies should be accorded to the interim pastor as to a new pastor. If there is no interim pastor the former pastor may serve as called upon and as approved by the Session. Upon leaving a church they should exercise care in influencing their former congregation either by conversation, correspondence, or other action. They shall seek to be supportive of the new pastor and of the program, policies, and activities of the former church.
6. The Interim Pastor: The purpose of an interim pastor is to prepare a particular congregation for the coming of a new pastor. Interim pastors will not seek to mold loyalties to themselves, but rather to the pastoral office, and, above all, loyalties to Christ and to the Church.
7. Relations To One's Successor in Ministry: When a pastor is called to another parish or retires, due care should be exercised not to influence either by direction or indirection, either by spoken or written word, the selection of the ministerial successor or the successor's ministerial policies. If a minister visits a former parish special discretion is required. It would be proper, in such instances, to pay one's respects to one's successor in ministry. Frequent visits to one's former parish are to be avoided.

8. Relations To One's Predecessor In Ministry: Successors also have a responsibility to be courteous to their predecessors. Moreover, wise pastors might strengthen the acceptability of their own ministry among the people by seeking appropriate occasions in which the former minister(s) can be included.

Nevertheless, the burden of responsibility between predecessors and successors, though mutual, is not entirely commensurate. It is the present pastor who now carries the load, but it is the former pastor who, in most instances, enjoys the longer ties of loyalty. Therefore, though the obligation of courtesy rests equally on both, the obligation of self-restraint rests more heavily upon the former pastor than on the incumbent.

9. The Minister And Retirement: Retired ministers and spouses who remain in the community of their last parish bear an especially heavy obligation of self-restraint in the matters expressed in the four preceding articles of these guidelines. Retired ministers and their spouses shall ordinarily seek congregations other than the congregation of their last active service in which to worship for a period of not less than two years following retirement.

10. At-Large Ministers: All at-large ministers should respect the position of the parish pastors regarding all ministerial functions within the community. Weddings, funerals, and baptisms should not be accepted by the at-large minister unless an invitation has been given by the pastor of the church involved. At-large ministers ordinarily should not counsel with nor advise former members concerning problems in their churches but should encourage them to seek the counsel of their pastors.

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