

Liturgy

Departure of a Pastor from a Congregation

When used as part of the Sunday Service, it may be used following the Prayers of the Church. In other service settings it may be used prior to the Benediction.

The pastor (P), the bishop or a representative of the synod/conference designated by the bishop (B), and a representative of the congregation (R) come forward, (C) congregational responses.

R: Pastor _____, on _____, we called you to be our pastor; to proclaim God's Word, to baptize new members into the Church of Christ, to announce God's forgiveness to us, and to preside at our celebration of the Lord's Supper. With the Gospel you have comforted us in times of sickness and trouble, and at the death of our loved ones. Sharing our joys and sorrows, you (and your family) have been important to our life together in the Church of Jesus Christ and in our service to this community. You have served our congregation faithfully for _____ years. You are now leaving our midst to (become pastor of _____ or to retire).

P: I thank you, the members of _____ Lutheran Church for the love, the kindness and support shown to me (and to my family) during active ministry among you. I ask forgiveness for the times I have not served well. I am grateful for the ways my ministry has been accepted. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.

C: We receive your thankfulness. We offer you our forgiveness and accept that you now leave to resume your ministry in (name of congregation or retirement). We express our gratitude for your time among us. We ask forgiveness for the times we have not served well with you. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.

P: I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

B: Members of _____ Lutheran Church, do you offer encouragement for _____ ministry as it unfolds in her/his new calling?

C: We do, with God's help.

B: Do you, Pastor _____, commend the congregation into the care of another pastor?

P: I do, with God's help.

B: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here?

P: I do, with God's help.

B: On behalf of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod, I witness to the words spoken here: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. We will hold you in our prayers as you begin your ministry at (_____ or as you retire). We pledge our support and love to you and wish you God's blessing.

B: Let us pray: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future that rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. We give you thanks for the countless ways our lives have been woven together in the tapestry of your church. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories, but move us in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

R: Let us bless the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

R: The Lord bless us, defend us from evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C: Amen.

The peace is shared.