

# *The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh*



## **Guidance for the Departing Parish Priest During a Time of Transition**

To help ensure a smooth transition from your tenure with the parish to that of its next spiritual leader, please follow the guidance provided below.

### ***Before announcing your departure ...***

#### **Inform the bishop.**

- Inform the bishop of your planned departure before sharing the news with anyone in your parish or elsewhere in the diocese.

#### **Be sure of your plan.**

- If you're accepting a new call, be sure that call is firm.
- If you're planning to retire, be sure you're ready to do so.
  - Check in with the Church Pension Group to confirm that you are vested in the pension plan and understand the details of your pension benefit.

#### **Set a firm departure date.**

- Your parish will benefit from being able to lay out a timeline for the transition and for its efforts throughout the process.

#### **Consult with your wardens and vestry.**

- When and how your departure is announced to the parish should be determined in consultation with the wardens and vestry. Under no circumstances should the announcement take place without their awareness.

### ***Before you leave ...***

#### **Distance yourself from the transition process.**

- A departing priest should have no involvement in the selection of an interim, what discernment methods are employed, or any other aspect of the process.
- Trust that the bishop, diocesan transition minister, and transition consultant (if any) will provide your parish with the necessary guidance.
- Instruct your vestry to communicate with the bishop's office directly (rather than asking you to serve as a conduit) about transition-related matters.

**Ensure a smooth handoff.**

- Record key information that will help your successor (and any interim clergy) to “hit the ground running.” This may include the details of any programs and projects that are currently in progress, key parish and community contacts, pastoral issues, etc. Leave this document with your senior warden or parish administrator, and ask that they give it to the new priest upon their arrival.

***After you leave ...*****Distance yourself from the parish.**

- Once you leave, neither you, nor your family, should have any expectation for participation in the life of the parish, and communication with parishioners should occur only by coincidence.
- After two years of your successor’s ministry, you may resume participation in the life of the parish *only* at the invitation of, and in the ways specified by, the current priest. It should not occur at your own suggestion, or at the invitation of anyone else in the parish.
- It is also important, at the time of your departure, that you disengage from the parish’s social media channels, and from social media interaction with individual members of your former parish.

If you have questions or concerns about how this guidance applies to your particular context, please contact the Bishop’s Office to schedule a conversation with the Bishop or Canon to the Ordinary.