

Guidelines for Congregations and Former Pastors
Adopted by Synod 2009
(item “d” adapted for online use)

1. That synod encourage use of the following guidelines for relationships between congregations and former pastors:
 - a. That pastors and councils of congregations recognize the significant implications of former pastors remaining in the congregation and become informed of the prevalence and types of problems that can arise when the former pastor does remain. This is particularly important when there is a tendency in the former pastor or the church council to minimize the potential difficulties and accentuate the potential advantages of his/her remaining with the congregation.
 - b. That the decision of the former pastor to remain in his/her previous church not be viewed as entirely the prerogative of the former pastor. Pastors and councils are advised to view the decision as having weight similar to that of the decision to originally call the pastor to this church. Therefore, the discernment process and decision ought to include that pastor, the council, and possibly representatives of the congregation and classis.
 - c. That a “waiting period” approach not be seen in itself as a sufficient strategy for addressing the potential hazards inherent in the relationship. The waiting period may be part of a strategy, but other variables ought also to be considered.
 - d. That pastors and councils seek communal clarity in these matters through an intentional conversation resulting in a written agreement signed by the former pastor, the council, and, in some cases, representatives of the classis (a sample of such an agreement is available online: [Former Pastor Agreement](#))
 - e. That, in situations where the former pastor does remain, the written and signed agreement convey a high level of clarity to ensure that appropriate boundaries are understood by the former pastor, the council, and the congregation and that the incoming pastor and future councils are not prevented from addressing potential difficulties that may arise.
 - f. That any written agreement between a former pastor and the congregation be reviewed at least on an annual basis and that adjustments to the agreement be considered if deemed necessary by the former pastor, the current pastor, or members of the church council.