

# Exit Interviews

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Exit interviews, while not required at the dissolution of a pastoral relationship, may be a helpful tool for presbyteries to consider as a regular step in the departure of a pastor. This is true whether the person leaving the congregation is a temporary pastor who has served the church for a few months or an installed pastor who is leaving after a number of years.

Exit interviews can be an opportunity to reflect on the ministry the pastor and congregation had together, its strengths and weaknesses, and be one step in the process of closure in the relationship between congregation and pastor. Information gathered through an exit interview may also be helpful in informing the congregation's future direction for ministry, especially as they call their next pastor.

A presbytery that uses exit interviews will want to find and implement a process that is most effective for their particular ministry context.

## **An Exit Interview Model**

With the Departing Pastor. The presbytery conducts the exit interview with the departing pastor soon after the pastor announces his or her departure. Questions to be asked and topics to be covered may include:

1. Ask the pastor to talk about things she/he feels good about in ministry with the congregation.
2. Ask about barriers to effective ministry. These barriers might be in the congregation, or community, or with the pastor.
3. Ask about the relationship between the pastor, the session and the congregation, including any difficulties or conflict.
4. Ask about advice the pastor might want give to the next pastor.
5. Review with the pastor the presbytery's expectations regarding appropriate and inappropriate contact between the pastor and congregation after the pastor's departure. This is especially important if the pastor is staying in town or moving to a nearby location.

***G-2.0905 Officiate by Invitation Only***

*After the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide their pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of session.*

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With the Session. The presbytery conducts the exit interview with the session after the pastoral relationship has departed. It is helpful for the moderator of session appointed by presbytery to be present for this interview. Questions to be asked and topics to be covered may include:

1. Ask about the positive growth in the life of the congregation during the pastor's time with the congregation.
2. Ask about barriers to effective ministry. These barriers might be in the congregation, or community, or the pastor.
3. Ask about the relationship between the pastor, the session and the congregation, including any difficulties or conflict.
4. Review with the session, the presbytery's expectations regarding appropriate and inappropriate contact with between the pastor and congregation after the pastor's departure. This is especially important if the pastor is staying in town or moving to a nearby location.
5. Begin discussion about maintaining regular worship and congregational life during the transition and search for new pastoral leadership.

**Resource:**

- Ethics for Departing Pastors