

## **Bishop's Message: E-News, March 24, 2015**

### **An Understanding During Clergy Leave-Taking: The Policy regarding Former Clergy of Congregations in the Diocese of Hawai'i**

A former clergy person's relationship (as well as the clergy spouse) to a previous congregation has a profound impact on the congregation's acceptance of new clergy and the healthy development of lay leadership. Setting, explaining, and adhering to appropriate and healthy boundaries with clear "good-byes" are very important for the congregation, the outgoing clergy, and the new clergy.

In Leave-Taking, all professional responsibilities and pastoral relationships will end on the effective date of the dissolution of pastoral relationship. There must be distance, and also spiritual/emotional separation. This does not mean that friendships must come to an end, but the outgoing clergy person must be clear that the relationship has changed. There is a special responsibility on the part of the outgoing clergy to prevent friendships from becoming confused with the pastoral relationships.

It is expected, therefore, that the outgoing clergy not attend worship, supply, officiate, participate in, or provide pastoral care to the church or parishioners from the former cure, for at least a full year after leaving. \*

Parishioners must consult with their congregation's current clergy, and not just a clergy person of choice, when needing ministrations of church (weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc.). The primary relationship is between the parishioner and the current clergy of the congregation. It is inappropriate for a former clergy person to officiate for parishioners at all in the first year after leaving a congregation, and then thereafter only at the express invitation of the current clergy person in charge. The former clergy person is expected to refer the parishioner to the current clergy and decline participation in any service. This is to be without negativity. It really is up to the current clergy person in charge to invite other clergy to participate and it is expected any former clergy to respectfully decline any such invitations until contacted by the current priest (and then s/he may still decline). If asked by a church member to have such ministrations rendered, it is incumbent upon the former clergy to politely decline and explain our Diocesan policy, and refer the church member to the current clergy in charge (or lay leader if there is no incumbent clergy). READ MORE

Personal and social interactions between former clergy and parishioners must be handled with care. In conversations between former clergy and past parishioners, there should never be discussions regarding the state and life of the congregation or the ministry of the current clergy, the family of the clergy person or any member of staff. It is up to the former clergy to put a stop to any such conversations. During times between settled clergy in charge and regarding clergy searches, former clergy should state no opinion about the congregation needs in clergy leadership, and the former clergy should not be involved in the congregation or the search in any way.

We live on islands. Clergy have multiple relationships in isolated locations, and we must understand the complexity of our context. After one year (ideally, this will not happen until a settled priest--vicar or rector-- is in place), former clergy may worship in their former congregations with the permission of the current clergy in charge. (This request will need to be renewed whenever there is a transition in clergy leadership.) Clergy are never members of congregations, but location and context may make attendance at another Episcopal Church impractical or personally difficult. The current clergy in charge

may give permission for a former clergy person to worship with the congregation and participate in the life of the congregation as the clergy person in charge thinks prudent.

In the event of concerns of misunderstanding of this policy, the Bishop will provide pastoral direction for implementation in individual situations.

\* On rare occasions, the Bishop may waive this provision in a pastoral emergency and when there is no other clergy person immediately available because of the context of the cure.