

## RETIRING AND STAYING IN THE COMMUNITY

The American Baptist Minister's Council Code of Ethics requires that a pastor leaving a pastorate will not perform any ministerial functions upon leaving: *"I will, upon my resignation or retirement, sever my ministerial leadership relations with my former constituents, and will not make ministerial contacts in the field of another ministerial leader without his/her request and/or consent."*

These functions include preaching, visitations, funerals, weddings, etc. For the most part this works wonderfully when a pastor moves away. However, when the pastor retires into the last community he/she served, is this statement possible to adhere to?

There are unique issues pertaining to the church and the retiring pastors who stay in the community.

1. THE PASTOR:

- He/she sees people of the church during the week
- He/she has made friends that are church members
- He/she belong to civic groups in the community
- The spouse also has friendships in the church
- The spouse also belongs to groups in the church and the community (i.e. Bible Study)

2. THE CHURCH:

- Parishioners constantly see the pastor and spouse
- Church find it difficult to grieve the loss of their pastor
- Church cannot connect to the new pastor
- Church cannot understand why the old pastor cannot perform weddings and funerals

As a pastor prepares to retire in the community there are some things of which he/she should be aware of and understand:

1. Your relationships have changed (even with friends)

People will always see you as pastor long after you have retired. When you visit them in their home or in the hospital, even as a friend, they will see you as their pastor

You can only prevent this one of two ways:

- a. Do not visit
- b. Be very open to inform them you are NOT here as a pastor but as a friend

Regardless of which approach, NEVER get to the hospital before the standing pastor!

2. NEVER give advice regarding church matters

Unfortunately people will see you as a sounding board to issue complaints or to get your thoughts on changes. Do not allow yourself to get trapped into these conversations

3. Be supportive of the incoming pastor or interim

The interim has the difficult task of bridging the gap between you and the next standing pastor

Be very aware that your words and actions can have a detrimental or positive effect on this ministry.

In addition, when the new pastor comes offer him/her prayer support and be available to assist him/her in whatever the pastor asks. DO NOT force yourself in but offer your assistance if the pastor needs your help, **then wait for the call!**

4. Your retirement has a profound effect on your spouse, especially if he or she has been active in the church

You may have retired but they still feel the need for the church family

Be very aware of his/her needs during this transition

People will want him/her to be involved as will the spouse

What is the solution to a pastor retiring into the community in which he/she has served?

Both pastor and church must be open to what is expected of each

Have a covenant that is written and signed by both the church and outgoing pastor which includes the following:

- A clear definition of what each expects of the other as they move forward
- An agreement for the pastor to stay away for a prescribed period of time (suggest 1 – 2 years)
- Define the relationship of the retiring pastor and the church people
- Note that no pastoral functions are to be done by the retiring pastor without invitation of the standing pastor or interim

The retiring pastor should find another church fellowship to become part of during the separation time

It might be wise to transfer your membership to another church, thereby shutting the door both symbolically and physically to any further ministerial functions in the church

The bottom line when retiring in the community in which you last served is that the responsibility for what happens lies in the responsibility of the retiring pastor. The success of such a separation depends on the willingness of the retiring pastor to let go of the church and to maintain the proper relationship with people with whom you have worked. The success of your successor will depend on how YOU handle the situation.

Following the above recommendations will not make the transition painless but will make it a bit more bearable. Just realize that this is not an easy transition for you or the church.