

The Episcopal Diocese of Ohio

Guidelines and Sample Letters for Clergy Transition Announcement (Departure)

Once a clergy transition is discerned, it's important to communicate clearly and thoughtfully with all parties involved. The bishop, wardens, and vestry should be the first to be notified—in that order—before sharing the news with the full faith community.

We recommend that the transition be publicly announced to the congregation 6-8 weeks before the priest's final Sunday, in coordination with the bishop's office. Ideally, this announcement should be made in writing (via email, and then hard copy to those who do not have email) rather than during a worship service. This ensures that all members of the community receive the same information at the same time and have space to process the news with care.

The announcement is typically made through two letters sent simultaneously:

- From the priest, expressing gratitude for the shared ministry, sharing their decision to depart, and naming the date of their final Sunday.
- From the wardens, acknowledging the departure, outlining next steps, and offering assurance that the bishop's staff is actively supporting the transition process.

These communications should include:

- The effective date of the departure (final Sunday and final day in the office, as applicable)
- A brief explanation of the reason for the transition, stated with honesty and care
- A note that the departing clergy person will step away from all pastoral and liturgical roles after their final Sunday, to support a healthy transition into future leadership
- Assurance that the bishop's staff will remain actively involved throughout the transition
- A tone of gratitude, clarity, and confidence in the community's ongoing leadership, resilience, and call

Sample letter templates are provided below and may be adapted for your context.

As of October 2025

1. Letter from the Departing Clergy Person

Dear People of [Church Name],

Grace and peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I write to share news that comes with both gratitude and grief: after much prayer and discernment, I have informed the bishop and your wardens of my decision to conclude my ministry as your priest. My final Sunday with you will be [date].

Serving among you has been one of the greatest honors of my life. Together, we have walked through seasons of celebration and struggle, shared the sacred rhythms of worship and service, and witnessed the Spirit moving in this beloved community. I give thanks for every moment we have shared, and for the ways you have shown me the love of Christ.

As we prepare for this transition, I want to affirm the strength and resilience of this faith community. You are deeply loved—by God, by one another, and by many across the wider Church. The bishop’s office is already working with the wardens to guide you faithfully through the next steps, including interim leadership and the beginning of a discernment process when the time is right.

It is important to say clearly that once I leave, I will no longer serve as your priest. I will not be available for pastoral care, weddings, funerals, or other sacramental roles. In that same spirit, I will also be limiting my interaction on social media related to the parish—this means refraining from commenting on parish posts, engaging in parish group discussions, or using social media as a means of pastoral connection. While I may remain “friends” or connected with some of you online, I will be doing so in a way that respects the boundaries of my departure and supports your next clergy leader. This boundary is essential to help you make space for the leadership that is to come. It does not mean my love or prayers for you will end—far from it. But it does mean stepping back so that you can move forward, grounded in trust that God is already preparing the way.

In the coming weeks, there will be time to say goodbye, to reflect, to pray, and to celebrate what we have shared. I hope you will join me in embracing this as a holy time—one marked by gratitude, honesty, and trust in God’s unfolding call.

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With love and deep respect,

Faithfully,

[The Rev. Clergy Person's Full Name]

2. Letter from the Wardens

Dear Friends in Christ,

Grace to you and peace.

After a period of discernment, the Rev. [clergy person's name] has shared with us that he/she/they will conclude his/her/their ministry at [Church Name]. [His/Her/Their] final Sunday will be [date] and [date] will be [his/her/their] last day in the office.

We write with both gratitude and sadness. Over the past [number] years, we have shared a meaningful season of ministry. [Clergy person's name] has led us with care, prayer, and deep commitment. We are grateful for [his/her/their] leadership and love—and we will miss [him/her/them] dearly.

At the same time, we trust in God's ongoing work among us. Transitions are part of the life of every church, and we believe this season can be one of reflection, growth, and new possibility. We are not walking this road alone. Our bishop, the Rt. Rev. Anne B. Jolly, and the diocesan staff are walking closely with us to provide guidance and support through the months ahead.

In the coming weeks, we will work together to plan a meaningful farewell for [Clergy person's title/name] and to honor the ministry we have shared. We also want to be clear about an important boundary: after [his/her/their] departure, the Rev. [clergy person's name] will no longer serve in a pastoral or liturgical role with this community. This is not about personal relationships—it is about making space for the next season of leadership to emerge, without confusion or divided loyalties. In the meantime, the wardens — in collaboration with the diocesan staff — are actively ensuring the continuity of worship, pastoral care, and parish life. We are in good hands, and support is in place to guide us through this time of transition.

We ask your prayers for the Rev. [clergy person's name] [and family, if applicable], and for

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our whole community in this time of change. May we walk together in grace, holding one another in compassion, and trusting that the Holy Spirit is already preparing the way forward.

In gratitude,

[Name], Senior Warden

[Name], Junior Warden

[Church Name], [City, State]