

Ritual of Covenant Release

GREETING

LEADER

Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. Children grow up. People commit themselves to one another. Loved ones and friends among us come to the end of their lives. Individuals move into our community and church life. Others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share the time of farewell with *our Pastor* who is leaving.

REMEMBRANCE AND RECOGNITION

The pastor or another representative of the local church may speak of the occasion being observed and share brief stories reminding the congregation of the gifts and contributions of the person(s) leaving. The person(s) being recognized may speak of the significance of the church for their faith and life.

GIVING AND SHARING SYMBOLS

Symbols may be given to those leaving and to the church, with appropriate words of appreciation and thanks.

ENDING AN AUTHORIZED MINISTRY

RECOGNITION OF THE END

A representative of the covenantal partners—the local church, association, or conference—may lead in these or other appropriate words.

LEADER

On date, this local church called name to serve as *pastor and teacher*.

AUTHORIZED MINISTER

I thank church name, its members and friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown me these last number of years years. I ask forgiveness for the mistakes I have made. I am grateful for the ways my leadership has been accepted. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.

PEOPLE

We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness, and accept that you now leave to minister elsewhere. We express our gratitude for your time among us. We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.

AUTHORIZED MINISTER

I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

VOWS OF RELEASE

All who are able may stand for these or similar words.

LEADER *addressing the congregation*

Do you, the members and friends of local church release name from the

duties of *pastor and teacher*?

PEOPLE

We do, with the help of God.

A

for use when called to another position

LEADER

Do you offer your encouragement for *her/his* ministry soon to begin as _____ *position* _____ of
_____ *location of ministry* _____?

PEOPLE

We do, with the help of God.

B

for use when retiring or not yet called to another position, or retiring

LEADER

Do you offer your encouragement for *her/his* ministry as it unfolds in new ways?

PEOPLE

We do, with the help of God.

LEADER

addressing the authorized minister

Do you, _____ *name* _____, release this local church from turning to you and depending on you?

AUTHORIZED MINISTER

I do, with the help of God.

LEADER

Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here and on the relationship with another who will come to serve?

AUTHORIZED MINISTER

I do, with the help of God.

WITNESS OF THE ASSOCIATION/ CONFERENCE

Church officers may come forward. A representative of the Association or Conference addresses them, using these or similar words.

REPRESENTATIVE

On behalf of the _____ *association/ conference* _____ and the United Church of Christ, I witness to the words spoken: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. The member churches of our association and conference hold each of you in prayer. We pledge our support in the transitions signified in this service.

OFFICERS

Thanks be to God.

PRAYER

All who are able may stand.

LEADER

Let us pray.

A

LEADER

O God, we give thanks for remembered times when we, together, have shared the life of faith. We thank you for the moments we have shared with *this person/these people* in worship, in learning, in service. We pray that _____ *name(s)* _____ will be aware of your Spirit's guidance as *he/she/they* move(s) to a *new and unknown place/new and unknown places*, in the name of Jesus the Savior.

PEOPLE

Amen.

B

ALL

God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories but move in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

BENEDICTION

LEADER

Go now, surrounded by our love and led by the promises of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When the Order for Times of Passage is incorporated into a Service of Word and Sacrament or a Service of the Word, those who have gone forward to participate in this order may return to their places in the congregation and the service continues.