

*The following covenant was prepared by the Order of Elders Advisory Committee and adopted by the clergy of the conference on June 7, 2016, at the Clergy Session of the Annual Conference.*

**A COVENANT AMONG CLERGY  
OF THE RIO TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
REGARDING CLERGY RELATIONSHIPS  
TO PAST APPOINTMENTS**

**Because**

**of my desire and commitment to be in covenant with clergy of the Rio Texas Conference**

**and because**

**of my desire to foster relationships between the clergy of this conference that will enhance mutual support and trust**

**and because**

**of my commitment to effective pastoral leadership in each local church,**

**I pledge to:**

- Refrain from returning to former parishes to conduct funerals, weddings, baptisms, or other functions of a pastor in charge;
- Assist pastors who follow me in my former parishes by refraining from *pastoral* visits with persons of former parishes;
- Be supportive and avoid being negative regarding the current pastor in *social* visits with my friends from former parishes;
- Leave the parsonage and yard clean and neat, with all current utility bills paid when I move;
- Do what I can to encourage and support my colleagues in ministry to fulfill this covenant.

## THE PROCESS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

**The focus of this covenant** is:

- (1) developing and maintaining healthy relationships among clergy and
- (2) enabling pastors currently serving churches we have served in the past to be as effective as they are able.
- (3) to fulfill the requirements found in the 2012 **The Book of Discipline** related to the issues of this covenant.

**Paragraph 341.4 states:** “It is unauthorized conduct for any pastor to hold a religious service (including weddings, funerals and baptisms) within the bounds of a pastoral charge other than the one to which appointed without the consent of the pastor in charge...”

**Paragraph 2702.1f of The Book of Discipline** lists as one of the chargeable offences: “relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor”).

Therefore, as part of our primary covenant of being in ministry together, we (the clergy of the Rio Texas Annual Conference) will do what we can to assist one another in keeping this covenant and hold one another accountable. We will use as our guideline the process demonstrated in Matthew 18:15-20: <sup>15</sup>“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup> But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup> Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

When a colleague appears to violate this covenant, the pastor whose ministry is being harmed can initiate the process of accountability. If it is practical and appropriate the pastor with the concern will discuss the matter with the colleague. If for some reason that does not seem appropriate or practical, the pastor with the concern may contact the chairperson of the order or fellowship to which the pastor with the concern belongs.

That chairperson will contact the colleague perceived to be violating the covenant to discuss the matter in relation to the covenant that the clergy of the Rio Texas Annual Conference have adopted. If the colleague perceived to be violating the covenant is a member of a different order or fellowship, the chairperson will consult the chairperson of the order of fellowship to which the colleague perceived to be violating the covenant belongs regarding how best to carry out this process.

If the colleague continues to violate the covenant, the chairperson and at least one other member of the order or fellowship to which the colleague perceived to be violating the covenant belongs, will visit with the colleague face to face to discuss the matter and seek resolution.

If the colleague continues to undermine the ministry of the pastor serving the congregation the problem will be brought to the attention of the appropriate district superintendent. The D.S. will investigate to discover whether or not either paragraph 341.4 and/or paragraph 2702.1f (see above) has been violated and take appropriate action.

