Order for Godspeed and Farewell for a Pastor

Congregational Leader:

Century after century Christians continue to take certain persons in the communities, set them apart and say, “You are our shepherd. Lead us to Christ likeness.” The community tells the pastor, “We want you to be responsible for saying and acting among us what we believe about God and kingdom and gospel. We need help in keeping our beliefs sharp, accurate and intact. We know there are strong influences that would dilute or destroy our faith. We want you to give us help. Minister with Word and Sacrament through all the stages of our lives, in our work and play, celebrations and sorrows. This is what the church says to individuals it calls its pastors. Today we are not just saying good-bye — this is a time of sending.

On __________ (date), ______________ (name), Assistant to the Bishop, presided as you were officially installed as Pastor here at ______________ (name of congregation) Church,

(Walk to pulpit) You were invited into this pulpit. In this spot you have proclaimed the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. This pulpit has not belonged to you; the saving message of Christ is not something one can possess, but only bear witness to. You have been a faithful occupant of this church’s pulpit and messenger of the good news of God’s love in Christ. As you leave this pulpit we thank God for your preaching ministry.

CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Congregational Leader: (Walk to font) At this font you have presided at the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Through the cleansing waters of baptism, we welcome new members into the family of Christ. The gift of new life in Christ belongs to God. The church is the custodian of this rite of welcome, and you have introduced this congregation to many new brothers and sisters in the faith. You have presided as confirmands affirmed their baptismal promises during your years with us. As you leave this font, we thank you for your ministry surrounding baptismal promises.

CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Congregational Leader: (Walk behind or to the altar) At this altar you have presided at the Sacrament of Holy Communion. You have reminded us of the story of Jesus’ beginning of this meal. You have provided instruction to those who would receive it for the first time. The meal is the Lord’s, and this congregation has been provider of this meal to the baptized who seek to be fed with the living presence of Christ. You have presided over this meal so that it could be served in an orderly fashion. As you leave this table, we thank you for presiding at the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Congregational Leader: (Walk to the top chancel step) Standing in front of this congregation you have led services where we thanked God for people who had died. You led us in the midst of grief while we expressed gratitude for God’s gift of life. You proclaimed the Good News of the resurrection of Jesus
Christ and encouraged the community with the comfort of the gospel, celebrating God’s victory over death. As you leave this sanctuary, we thank you for being with us in our times of loss.

CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Congregational Leader: (Standing at the top of the chancel steps) It is here that you presided at services where couples were married. You were present to rejoice with those who rejoice. Thank you for sharing those and other great times of joy.

CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Congregational Leader: (Hold up keys) When you came here, you received keys to this building. You have had a study here to do your work of reading and preparing, to meet people for small talk and big conversations. You have heard confessions and spoken words of absolution. Your study has been a place of prayer and preparation. As you return your key, we thank you for your prayers, your diligent preparation and your careful listening.

CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Congregational Leader: It is indeed possible we will see you again, but you will no longer be Pastor of Cross Lutheran Church. We ask you to honor that and help us to honor that boundary. You will continue to be a sister in Christ’s family and we will cherish that relationship. Thank you for journeying with us these years.

CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Synod Representative: On behalf of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, I witness to the words spoken here: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. We will hold you, ________________(name of pastor who is leaving), in our prayers as you discern your next call in ministry. We pledge our support and love to you and wish you God’s blessing. We will care for ________________(name of congregation) Church in their transition and seek God’s will as we bring forward new candidates for pastoral leadership.

Congregational Leader: PASTOR __________(name of pastor leaving), as we release you from the call to serve this congregation, we celebrate that God continues to call you. When you were just a baby, God called you, claiming you in the waters of baptism for the work of Christ, joining him in loving the world into new life. In your adulthood, you entered the vocation of marriage and God blessed you with the vocation of motherhood. As you __________________________ (name what is happening next, retirement, new call, time of discernment, etc) remember that God continues to call you to live out these vocations in faithfulness and love. You are answering this call. We are sending you. You have been part of this church family, sharing your gifts for the sake of Christ’s mission in our community. We are proud to send you with our blessing.

(to pastor) Please kneel to receive our prayers:
Gracious God, you have called us in our baptism to be your servants. You have enabled us to respond to your call as a community of believers. Thank you for the partnership in the gospel we have enjoyed with Pastor ______________________ (name of pastor who is leaving and his/her family members as is appropriate). Now send them forth to ______________________ ("continue their work in another congregation and community" or whatever fits the situation). Strengthen them for the mission you have placed before them, and may they go from here knowing our love and our continuing partnership. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

(Pastor stands) When we end our worship, you have often said to us, “Go on peace. Serve the Lord.” Today we speak it to you.

CONGREGATION: GO IN PEACE. SERVE THE LORD.

PASTOR: Thanks be to God.

PASTOR does the benediction.