

July 10, 2026

Dear Members and Friends of Columbine,

As we prepare to bid a fond farewell to Rev. Sr Steve Poos-Benson, whose last day with us will be July 19th, our Council and the Presbytery's Minister Relations Committee want to share an important part of this transition process: the Covenant of Closure.

What is a Covenant of Closure?

A Covenant of Closure is a formal, signed agreement between the departing pastor, the church Council, and the Presbytery. It establishes clear boundary lines for the pastor's relationship with the congregation when their official ministry ends. This is a normal, and healthy part of ending a call. Closure allows the departing Pastor to be free to invest in their next ministry and the congregation to connect with their next Pastors.

The Denver Presbytery, CUC Council and Steve have worked to shape the Covenant of Closure. It requires the departing pastor to:

- Cease all pastoral functions: The former pastor will no longer perform baptisms, weddings, funerals, or hospital visits for members of this congregation.
- Refuse requests for pastoral services: If a church member reaches out for pastoral care, the former pastor must gently decline and redirect them to the church's current leadership.
- Step away from church business: The departing pastor will refrain from giving advice, opinions, or directions regarding church administration, finances, or the search for a new pastor.
- Consult before visiting: The former pastor must seek permission from the Session Moderator before attending worship services, special events, or visiting the church campus.

Why is this Covenant Necessary?

While these rules may initially feel rigid or hurtful, they are grounded in deep pastoral care, ethics and healthy family systems. The Presbyterian Church institutes these policies for several vital reasons:

- To Protect the Next Pastor: A new pastor or interim needs space to build trust and form an authentic pastoral bond with you. If members continue to look to the former pastor for care, it undermines the authority and ministry of the incoming leader.
- To Protect the Congregation: It allows the congregation to fully enter a season of transition, process their grief, and open their hearts to the future shepherd God is calling to lead them.

- To Protect the Departing Pastor: When entering into their next ministry, the departing pastor needs a clean break to fully commit to their next chapter without the emotional or professional pull of their previous congregation.

What About Our Friendships?

It is vital to understand that a Covenant of Closure does not require the termination of personal friendships. Social connections can continue, but they must be maintained purely as friendships. In social settings, conversations must strictly avoid church business, congregational complaints, or pastoral care needs.

The responsibility of maintaining these boundaries lies primarily with the professional ethics of the departing pastor. However, as a congregation, the greatest gift of love we can give Pastor Steve is to respect this covenant and not place him in the uncomfortable position of having to say "no" to a pastoral or personal request.

We invite you to join us in celebrating, and praying for Pastor Steve and his family during this time of departure, even as we trust in God's faithful provisions for the next chapter of the life of Columbine.

Grace and peace,

The Council

In partnership with the Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery