



The Graceful Exit: A Pastor's Journey from Good-bye to Hello

Mary C. Lindberg

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Pastors say goodbye to congregations. Sometimes their goodbyes are timely and sweet; sometimes they are jarring and painful. But as they leave, they face a unique journey of grief, one shaped by their role. They face both the outward grief of leaving people behind and the inward grief of leaving an identity behind. In *The Graceful Exit*, Lutheran pastor Mary Lindberg shares insights from her experience of ending her service to a congregation, as well as wisdom from other pastors who have changed their life work. Lindberg invites readers to pull apart the strands of self and role, individual and community; confront regrets, confusion, and dislocation; and figure out where and who God is at this juncture in their lives.

She offers the book she wishes someone had handed her about finding a new church home, about getting a life, about relating to the colleagues who stayed. She reflects on how to be a pastor in a non-pastoral role, how to find community, and how to be graceful in the midst of the awkward unknown. Lindberg acknowledges that as pastors leave congregations, they have to discern how to wrap up their ministry and get out the door without regrets. She recognizes that most pastors will struggle with the spiritual themes of fulfillment, surrender, community, legacy, and separation. But she also believes pastors can face these challenges together. *The Graceful Exit* invites them into a community of healing and shows them that God walks with them to a new place, even as God keeps on loving the place they have left.

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