**MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!**

**Approval, Resignation and Dismissal of Church Membership in an Affiliated PAOC Church**

All policies and processes for approval, resignation, discipline, restoration and dismissal of Church Members must fully meet what is required in the approved Local Church Constitution. Any membership policies and processes can in no way lessen the Constitutional requirements or processes. Any requirements and/or processes, created in addition to the Local Church Constitution, must be approved by the Church Leadership and duly recorded in the Church records. Such requirements and processes can only “strengthen” what is stated in the Local Church Constitution.

Note – the term “Leadership” refers to the elected or appointed Church Leadership Team of the Church (i.e. – Church Board, Pastor’s Council, etc.).

From the PAOC Local Church Constitution (2014 Template) regarding Church Membership:

**ARTICLE 6 MEMBERSHIP**

**6.1** Persons desiring to become members of this local church shall give credible profession of faith in

the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. They shall give evidence of compliance with the biblical standard of

Christian practice and manifest spiritual growth by giving evidence of the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy,

peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22,23).

They shall refrain from "acts of the sinful nature: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like" (Galatians 5:19-21 NIV). Sexual immorality shall be interpreted to mean common-law marital relationships, pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relationships (1 Corinthians 6:15-18; 7:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Hebrews 13:4), and all forms of homosexual activity, along with other practices deemed inexcusable for Christian conduct, and which place a person under God's judgment (Romans 1:26-2:11).

They shall indicate a desire to live in harmony with this body of believers, shall accept the doctrinal standards as set forth in the *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths*, and shall be regular financial supporters of this local church.

**6.2** Membership shall consist of the following:

**6.2.1** *Regular Members.* Persons 18 years of age and over who fulfil the requirements of Article 6.1 shall be known as regular members.

**6.2.2** *Junior Members.* Persons between the ages of 12 and 18 who fulfil the requirements of Article 6.1 may be eligible for junior membership. Such membership does not qualify for voting privileges at congregational business meetings.

**BY-LAW 1 MEMBERSHIP**

**1.1** MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE: A membership committee composed of the pastor and the [leadership] shall receive applications for membership, shall make investigation relating thereto as it deems proper, and shall approve for admission into the local church those applicants who meet membership requirements.

**1.2** PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

**1.2.1** Application for membership shall be received on a signed application form whereby the applicant agrees to abide by the provisions of the Local Church Constitution and By-Laws including the terms of membership as stated in Article 6.1.

**1.2.2** Applicants who have been approved by the membership committee for membership in this local church shall be publicly received into the local church (Galatians 2:9) and may receive notification confirming membership. Membership may be reviewed annually by the membership committee.

**1.3** TRANSFER: Members who move from another local church and desire to have their membership transferred should request a certificate or letter of transfer from the membership committee of the former local church for presentation to the membership committee of this local church. Members who move to another local church shall be given, upon written request, a certificate or letter of transfer by the membership committee of this local church.

**1.4** DISMISSAL OF MEMBERSHIP: Grounds for dismissal of membership in this local church shall include the following:

**1.4.1** VOLUNTARY RESIGNATION OF MEMBERSHIP

**1.4.1.1** Voluntary withdrawal from membership in this local church or reception into the membership of another congregation;

**1.4.1.2** Issuance of a transfer letter;

**1.4.1.3** Absence from the regular services of the local church for three (3) consecutive months, upon issuance of a letter from the membership committee noting this voluntary withdrawal.

**1.4.2** DISCIPLINARY DISMISSAL OF MEMBERSHIP: Upon the conclusion of disciplinary procedures according to By-Law 6 of the Local Church Constitution and By-Laws which finds a member responsible for a failure under the causes of disciplinary action.

The policies, procedures, documents, and all actions for Church Membership must be approved by the Church Leadership, and duly recorded in the Church Records at any meeting of the Church Leadership.

Receiving (Welcoming) New Members

The Church Leadership shall provide an approved Membership Application Form to individuals seeking Church membership. The Membership Application Form needs to be aligned with the requirements of the Local Church Constitution and must be approved by the Church Leadership.

Suggested policy for practice of receiving and welcoming of new Church Members:

* Provide one or two dates annually for new Members to be approved and received into fellowship. I.e. – May 1 and October 1. It is good policy and practice to not provide approval of new members less that 60 days prior to the Annual Business Meeting date.
* Ensure that individuals seeking Church Membership receive necessary information such as the Local Church Constitution, the PAOC Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths and other documents pertaining to local Church mission and structure and PAOC structure.
* Provide opportunity (may be in a meeting) for information to be given and questions to be asked regarding membership. Attendance at such a meeting could be mandatory and required prior to receiving a signed application. This would ensure proper understanding is received as to the requirements and responsibility of Church Membership.
* As necessary, ensure proper examination of applicants and signed application forms take place prior to approval or non-approval.
* The Church Leadership must record the acceptance or non-acceptance of individual applications of Membership at a duly called Leadership meeting and such minutes and approved applications are kept indefinitely in the Church Records.
* Publicly receive and welcome new Members into the local church. This can be part of a Sunday Service.
* Provide notification by letter to each person confirming approved membership, or in some cases that membership application has not been approved. Of course, if approval is not given, there should be a face-to-face meeting with the person providing the reasons why approval was not given.
* Approved Membership Applications shall be maintained in the Church Records. It is good policy to create separate files for “Current Members” and another for “Former Members”.

Church Membership Records

All Membership actions and documents shall be maintained in the Church Records.

Church Membership Records should be adjusted annually or as required.

Dismissal of Membership

1. Voluntary Resignation of Membership:

Practice and process must be aligned with the Local Church Constitution. See attached examples of letters for voluntary resignation of membership.

All decisions regarding Voluntary Resignation of Members must made by the Church Leadership and recorded in the Church Records.

1. Disciplinary Dismissal of Membership:

All disciplinary process of individuals holding Membership must be in accordance with and fully follow the processes of the Local Church Constitution. All decisions regarding the Disciplinary Dismissal of Members or matters pertaining to such must be made by the Church Leadership and recorded in the Church Records. These processes include all aspects such as Investigation, Charges, Hearing, Discipline, Restoration, Reinstatement and Dismissal of Membership.

**Voluntary Resignation of Membership - Example of Letter for Request of Transfer of Membership**

(Currently Dated on Church Stationary; Change title as necessary for Church Board)

Dear [Name of Church Member],

The Church Board has officially recorded in the Church records the voluntary resignation of your Church Membership at [Name of Church] based on the requirement of the Local Church Constitution through your request for a Letter of Transfer of your Membership to another Church. A letter of transfer of your membership has been sent to [Name/Location of Transfer Church].

We thank you for your past participation as part of the community at [Name of Church] and ask for God’s provision and blessing in your life and ministry.

Sincerely in Christ and on behalf of the Church Board,

[Name]

Secretary of the Board

NOTE – Normally, a transfer of Church membership would be understood by the Local Church Constitution to be between PAOC Churches. On occasion, a person will request a transfer of Church membership to a non-PAOC Church. It needs to be explained to them that while the letter can be provided, it is the prerogative of the Leadership of the Church that is receiving the letter, to accept.

**Voluntary Resignation of Membership - Example of Letter to Member**

Re: Voluntary Resignation of Membership – Initial contact when individual has not been attending.

(Currently Dated on Church Stationary; Change title as necessary for Church Board)

Dear [Name of Church Member],

The Church Board is currently reviewing the Membership records of [Name of Church]. From our observation and records, you have not been in attendance at Church Services for at least three months. The Local Church Constitution specifies your non-attendance as voluntary withdrawal of membership.

The Church Board would be happy for you to meet with them if this is inaccurate and there is necessary reason for your absence. Please inform us if it is your desire to meet with them prior to the next Board Meeting to be held on [Date of meeting].

If the Church Board does not hear from you, they will adjust the Membership records and remove your name from the list of current Members at their next meeting and record in the minutes.

We thank you for your past participation as part of the community at [Name of Church].

Sincerely in Christ and on behalf of the Church Board,

[Name]

Secretary of the Board

**Voluntary Resignation of Membership – Example of Letter to Member**

Re: Voluntary Resignation of Membership through a verbal request to resign/withdraw membership.

(Currently Dated on Church Stationary; Change title as necessary for Church Board)

Dear [Name of Church Member],

The Church Board is currently reviewing the Membership records of [Name of Church]. The Board would like to officially act on your verbal request to resign your Church Membership made on [Date] to [Name of person the verbal request was made to]. The Board is asking you to please provide a written request for resignation of your membership for the Church records and send either by mail or email. The Board will then process your desire as expressed.

If the Church Board does not hear from you prior to their next meeting on [Date of meeting], they will adjust the Membership records and remove your name from the list of current Members based on your verbal request, at their next meeting and record in the minutes.

We thank you for your past participation as part of the community at [Name of Church].

Sincerely in Christ and on behalf of the Church Board,

[Name]

Secretary of the Board

**Voluntary Resignation of Membership – Example of Letter to Member**

Re: Voluntary Resignation of Membership – Final letter for voluntary withdrawal of membership.

(Currently Dated on Church Stationary; Change title as necessary for Church Board)

Dear [Name of Church Member],

The Church Board has officially recorded in the Church records the voluntary resignation of your Church Membership at [Name of Church] (NOTE – if a written request was received by email or mail, add here – “based on your written request”.)

We thank you for your past participation as part of the community at [Name of Church] and ask for God’s provision and blessing in your life and ministry.

Sincerely in Christ and on behalf of the Church Board,

[Name]

Secretary of the Board