

Removing Names from the Roll: Policy and Procedures

Removing names from the church roll is serious business. We are in the business of recruiting persons for Jesus Christ and the Church, not casting anyone aside carelessly. It is also our task to diligently seek to reclaim those who have become negligent in supporting the church with their prayers, presence, gifts and service. There are, however, procedures in the *Discipline* for removing names when all efforts have failed. Paragraph 228 of the *2008 Discipline* outlines these procedures. It would also be helpful to read paragraphs 230-242. For names to be removed by charge conference action, steps in paragraph 228 must be strictly followed. Names presented for the first time at charge conference will not be removed. They will be referred back to those responsible for membership care in the local church until all steps in paragraph 228 have been followed. *Many of these persons could be reactivated and reclaimed through caring efforts.*

SUMMARY OF PARAGRAPH 228, *2008 Discipline*

While primary responsibility and initiative rest with each professing member to faithfully perform the vows of the baptismal covenants that have been solemnly assumed, if the member should be neglectful of that responsibility, these procedures shall be followed:

1. With reference to those who have moved away and whose addresses are known, efforts are to be made to encourage transfer to a church where the member is now living. If a professing member residing in the community is negligent of the vows or is regularly absent from the worship of the church without valid reason, the pastor and the membership secretary shall report that member's name to the church council, which shall do all in its power to reenlist the member in the active fellowship of the church. It shall visit the member and make clear that, while the member's name is on the roll of a particular church, one is a member of The United Methodist Church as a whole, and that, since the member is not attending the church where enrolled, the member is requested to do one of four things:
 - a. Reaffirm the baptismal vows and return to living in the community of the baptismal covenant in the church where the member's name is recorded,
 - b. Request transfer to another United Methodist church,
 - c. Request transfer to a particular church of another denomination, or
 - d. Request withdrawal.

If a member does not comply with any of the available alternatives over a period of two years, the member's name may be removed by action of charge conference.

2. With reference to those who have moved away and whose addresses are known, efforts are to be made to encourage transfer to a church where the member is now living. This is to be done for at least two years before the name can be submitted for charge conference removal. (Some prefer leaving membership in their home church while temporarily away for work, military service, college, etc. Their request should be honored.)
3. With reference to those who have moved away and whose addresses are unknown, efforts should be made to locate the missing members by listing their names in the bulletin, newsletter, on bulletin boards, and by reading the names from the pulpit, etc. If all efforts fail after two years, the names may be removed by charge conference action.
4. With reference to procedures for removing names by charge conference action, after two years of diligent effort, the member's name may be removed from the roll of members by vote of the charge conference on recommendation of the pastor and the evangelism ministry chairperson, each name being considered individually; provided that the member's name shall have been entered in the minutes of the annual charge conference for two consecutive years preceding removal. On the roll there shall be entered after the name: "Removed by order of the charge conference"; and if the action is on the basis of paragraph 3, there shall be added: "Reason: address unknown." However the record shall be retained in order that upon reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant the person may be restored as a member.