

# 2007 Report of Members Absent From The Fellowship

Church Number \_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

## *The Discipline--2004, ¶228.2b—*

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

(1) 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 local 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 where the member will return to living in the community of the baptismal covenant (*see* ¶ 239), (c) arrange transfer to a particular church of another denomination (*see* ¶ 240), or (d) request withdrawal. If the member does not comply with any of the available alternatives over a period of two years, the member’s name may be removed. (*See* § [4].)

(2) If a professing member whose address is known is residing outside the community and is not participating in the worship or activity of the church, the directives to encourage a transfer of the member shall be followed each year until that member joins another church or requests in writing that the name be removed from the roll of professing members; *provided*, however, that if after two years the council has not been able to relate that member to the church at the new place of residence, the name may be removed from the roll of members by the procedure of § (4) below.

(3) If the address of a professing member is no longer known to the pastor, the membership secretary and the evangelism ministry group chairperson shall make every effort to locate the member., and circulate the list of names throughout the parish including listing the name in the church bulletin, circulating it throughout the parish, and reading it from the pulpit. If the member can be located, the directives of either § (1) or § (2) above shall be followed, but if after two years of such efforts the address is still unknown, the member’s name may be removed from the roll of members by the procedure of § (4)

(4) If the directives of §§ (1), (2), or (3) above have been followed for the specified number of years without success, the member’s name may be removed as a professing member 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. On the roll membership record there shall be entered after the name: “Removed by Charge Conference Action”; and if the action is on the basis of § (3), there shall be added: “Reason: Address Unknown.” The record shall be retained<sup>4</sup> in order that upon reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant the person may be restored as a member. Should a transfer of membership be requested, the pastor may, after consultation with the person, issue the certificate of transfer.

(5) When a professing member is charged with an offense and wishes to forego trial, the charge conference may permit the member to withdraw (¶ 2719.3). In this case, the notation “Withdrawn under charges” shall be entered alongside the member’s name on the record, along with the date.

(6) Recognizing that the Church has a continuing moral and spiritual obligation to nurture all persons, even those whose names have been removed from the roll of members, it is recommended that a list of names thus removed shall be maintained. It shall then become the responsibility of the church council to provide for the review of this list at least once a year. (*See also* ¶ 234.) After the review has been made, it is recommended that the pastor and/or the commission on evangelism contact

those whose names appear on this list, either in person or by other means, in the most effective and practical manner. The names and addresses of those who have moved outside the local church's area should be sent to local churches in their new communities that those churches may visit and minister to them.

c) The pastor, in cooperation with youth and young adult leaders in the congregation, shall disseminate information about United Methodist related Campus Ministry to college/university students or potential college/university students who are baptized members, professing members, or constituents of the congregation.

**THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ASSURE THAT THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ABOVE PARAGRAPH OF THE DISCIPLINE HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT AND WILL ALLOW ONLY THE PRESENTATION OF NAMES WHERE THESE REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN MET.**

Your Superintendents urge you, as those who care for these persons who have professed their love for our Lord Jesus Christ and have united with the community of faith and fellowship of your local congregation of Christ's Church, to be good stewards of the faith as you live out of this paragraph. System and procedures exist to help us be responsible in our effective witness for our Savior; they are a tools to be used alongside the grace and goodness of God in relationship to each and every one who seeks an abiding relationship with our triune God and the community of faith. It is important to remember that few, if any, absent members are reclaimed by threats of removal. A change of heart is most likely to occur where spirit meets with spirit at a much deeper level.

Furthermore, let us always try to be sensitive to individual circumstances and needs as well as the meaning of membership. If we search *The Discipline* earlier in this same Paragraph, we find some procedures for the care of active members that may make this form superfluous. Your Superintendents plead with you to never let the care of those who have been absent from the fellowship of the Body of Christ in your midst wait until the few days prior to your Charge Conference meeting; rather, the care of all members should be an on-going part of the ministry of the Body.

One specific step which some churches have taken is the adoption of a policy that (1) they will stand by and maintain their youth members throughout their school years including college, continuing to contact and minister with them, (2) they will do the same with persons in the armed services, and (3) they will maintain as members and endeavor faithfully to minister to those members of many years who now are shut-ins or in nursing homes.

#### LISTS OF MEMBERS WHO HAVE BEEN ABSENT FROM THE FELLOWSHIP

##### ONE YEAR

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.

##### TWO YEARS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.