

MEMBERSHIP REVIEW POLICY

This Membership Review Policy establishes a pastoral and consistent process for reviewing Communicant Membership at Trinity Klein. It is intended to encourage faithful engagement with Word and Sacrament, ensure proper care for all members, and support clear and accurate membership records in accordance with the Constitution (Article IV) and Bylaws of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church.

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Hebrews 10:23-25

- A. **Review Frequency:** A formal review of Communicant Membership will be conducted twice per year, in January and July, by the Senior Pastor and/or designated staff. Each review considers the prior six-month period and supports an ongoing, twelve-month understanding of member participation.
- B. **Active Communicant Status:** To be recorded as **Active**, a communicant member must:
 - 1. Attend in-person worship at Trinity Klein **at least 13 times** in the six-month review period (equivalent to every other week); and
 - 2. **Participate in Holy Communion** at least once during that time, as assumed from attendance at communion services

These thresholds align with the biblical expectation that Christians regularly gather for worship (Hebrews 10:25) and make faithful use of the Means of Grace.

Only **in-person worship** and communion participation at Trinity Klein are considered. Records will be based on documented attendance and elder/staff contacts within Trinity's database.

- C. **Status Categories:** Members are categorized during each review as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Description</u>
Active	Meets worship and communion thresholds
Infrequent	Attended worship or communion, but below thresholds
Unresponsive	No worship attendance, communion participation, or contact within the review period
Under Pastoral Care	Known and documented circumstances (e.g. medical, homebound, deployed) and being actively shepherded

Special Consideration for College Students and Other Temporarily Relocated Members: Members who are temporarily living away from the area (such as college students, military service members, or those in extended care) will not be considered inactive or unresponsive solely due to lack of in-person attendance.

These individuals will be categorized as “**Under Pastoral Care**” provided that:

- 1. Their temporary relocation is known and documented in the church database;

2. There is at least **one confirmed instance of two-way communication per year** affirming their desire to remain connected to Trinity Klein.

The church will make reasonable efforts to maintain pastoral connection during their time away. These members will not be considered for self-exclusion unless they become entirely unresponsive and disconnected without explanation.

D. Privileges of Active Membership

Members who are categorized as **Active Communicant Members** according to this policy are considered to be **in good standing** and are eligible for the full privileges of membership at Trinity Klein, including:

- **Voting rights** in the Voters Assembly, per the Constitution
- **Eligibility to hold elected or appointed office**, including but not limited to Elder, Board Director, and School Commission member
- **Tuition discounts** for children attending Trinity Lutheran School or Concordia Lutheran High School, where applicable
- **Burial** in Trinity's cemetery, if otherwise eligible

Members categorized as **Infrequent** or **Unresponsive** are considered **not in good standing**. However, they **remain Communicant Members** and will continue to be shepherded with care. They will not be considered self-excluded unless all criteria for self-exclusion (outlined below) are met.

Members not in good standing may be **restored to Active status** through renewed participation in worship and the Lord's Supper, as described in the "Restoration to Active Communicant Status" section of this policy.

E. Self-Exclusion Review Process

1. **After One Period of Inactivity (6 months):** Members who are categorized as **Infrequent** or **Unresponsive** will be contacted by pastoral staff or elders. This contact should be personal and pastoral, offering encouragement, listening, and extending an invitation to re-engage.
2. **After Two Consecutive Periods of Inactivity (12 months):** If a member remains **Unresponsive** for twelve months, they may be **reviewed for self-exclusion** in accordance with **Constitution Article IV.C**.
3. **Criteria for Self-Exclusion:** A member will not be considered self-excluded unless all the following conditions are met:
 - i. **Sustained Inactivity:** The member has not attended in-person worship, received Holy Communion, or engaged in any documented contact with the church for a continuous **twelve-month period**.
 - ii. **Multiple Contact Attempts:** At least **two distinct forms of contact** have been attempted by pastoral staff or elders using available methods (e.g., phone call, email, text, first-class mail, or personal visit). These attempts must be documented and reasonably spaced to provide opportunity for response.
 - iii. **Two-Way Communication Not Achieved Within 30 Days:** There has been no confirmed two-way communication with the member within **30 days of the most recent contact attempt**. A letter mailed or voicemail left without any acknowledgment does not constitute sufficient contact.

Two-way communication requires a clear and intentional response from the member (e.g., verbal, written, or digital acknowledgment).

- iv. **Pastoral Review and Documentation:** The situation is reviewed by the **Senior Pastor** in consultation with the **Elder Chair**, and the recommendation for self-exclusion is documented in the church's membership records.
- v. **Pastoral Discretion for Ambiguous Cases:** If there is partial, unclear, or one-sided communication, the case may be placed in the category of "**Under Pastoral Care**" rather than self-excluded, at the discretion of the Senior Pastor. This ensures grace and due process when the member's intent or situation is not fully known.

Members removed through self-exclusion are not publicly announced but are updated in membership records. They are always welcomed to re-engage with the body of Christ at Trinity.

F. **Restoration to Active Communicant Status:** Members removed through self-exclusion may request reinstatement. Restoration is not automatic, but welcomed with joy and care. The following steps must be completed:

1. **Initiate Contact:** The individual must reach out to a pastor, elder, or church office, expressing desire to return.
2. **Pastoral Conversation:** A brief conversation will be held to clarify their understanding of communicant membership and reaffirm their agreement with Trinity's confession of faith as defined in Article III and Article IV.B.1 of the Constitution.
3. **Demonstrated Participation (Probationary Period):** The returning member will enter a **six-month probationary period**, during which they are expected to:
 - i. Attend at least 13 in-person worship services at Trinity Klein
 - ii. Participate in Holy Communion at least once

At the conclusion of this period, the Senior Pastor and Elders will confirm the member's return to **Active** status and update the church's records accordingly.

Note: Returning members will not be required to repeat the membership class unless their time away has exceeded two years or doctrinal realignment is pastorally necessary. The goal is restoration, not redundancy.

G. **Confidentiality and Shepherding Focus:** All aspects of this review process are to be conducted with pastoral sensitivity, discretion, and grace. The process is not disciplinary in nature but exists to support spiritual health, faithful shepherding, and a clear witness to what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus.

Membership Review Policy Changes

Version	Date	Author	Rationale
1.0	7/14/25	Trinity Board of Directors	Approved by Board

Version Explanation:

- 1. Each draft of the document is saved as an incremental number: 0.1, 0.2 etc. until the document is approved. Then it becomes version 1.0
- 2. Subsequent small changes become 1.1, 1.2 ...
- 3. Next whole number occurs at a major update or another approval point, e.g. 2.0