

# How Membership is Lost

of Palominas Chapel Church of God

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## Walking Together in Love and Accountability

Membership means joining a spiritual family. Understanding these standards helps us walk faithfully together and maintain our collective, reliable testimony for Christ.

We will make a reasonable effort to notify any individual in writing if their status has changed from 'good standing' to 'probationary' or 'forfeited'.

## When Membership is Forfeited

Membership forfeiture occurs when pastoral leadership determines you have:

### 1. Actively oppose our teaching or leadership

Publicly contradicting established doctrine, organizing resistance to pastoral decisions, sowing discord, refusing to submit to pastoral authority after counsel, or divisive behavior that undermines unity. (Private, respectful questions to leadership are always welcome!)

### 2. Don't follow our conduct and lifestyle standards

Standards as established in our Statement of Faith, Code of Conduct, ongoing preached teaching, and pastoral counsel.

### 3. Bring reproach on Palominas Chapel or its members

Criminal conduct, moral failure (public or private), scandalous behavior, conduct that harms our witness, or failure to follow pastoral counsel (through preaching, direct instruction, or approved counsel from others).

### 4. Stop maintaining faithful attendance

Active participation in worship and congregational life is essential. We understand life happens - illness, emergencies, work conflicts can be approved by pastoral leadership.

### 5. Stop practicing biblical giving

Members must practice “recordable” biblical giving through tithe of increase plus offerings, given voluntarily as spiritual stewardship, not as membership dues. Pastoral leadership assesses biblical stewardship based on heart attitude, circumstances, and spiritual fruit in accordance with Scripture—recognizing that individual situations vary. Pastoral counsel is available for those whose situation requires discussion. Those who donate through check or electronic transfer will have access to a record of giving. (Leviticus 27:30, Malachi 3:8-10, 1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Matthew 23:23).

## **6. Don't follow biblical dispute resolution**

When disputes or concerns arise, talk privately first, seek mediation with pastoral leadership if needed, then submit to the pastor's final decision. This maintains unity in Christ's body. Refusing to submit results in forfeiture.

## **7. File civil lawsuits against the church or fellow members**

Filing civil legal action against the church, directors, pastor, leadership, or members in good standing violates Scripture (1 Corinthians 6:1-8) and results in immediate forfeiture. *This doesn't prevent mandatory legal reporting or reporting criminal conduct - this provision addresses internal spiritual disputes only.*

## **8. Seek outside spiritual counsel that contradicts our teaching**

Receiving spiritual counsel, discipleship, or teaching from outside leaders that contradicts our doctrine, standards, or pastoral direction may result in forfeiture. We don't dictate where you attend, but if outside participation introduces contrary doctrine or discord, we must address it.

## **9. Resign During Active Discipline**

If you are currently under disciplinary review or probation, membership cannot be voluntarily withdrawn until the process is concluded as determined by pastoral leadership. Walking away during discipline does not end the process: it demonstrates refusal to submit to pastoral authority and biblical accountability, and may itself constitute grounds for forfeiture. By becoming a member, you voluntarily agree to see any disciplinary process through to its conclusion.

## **Your Membership is Continuously Evaluated**

Evaluation doesn't stop after initial acceptance - it's ongoing. Any lapse in spiritual fruit or biblical standards can affect your standing.

The Pastor makes final membership decisions through Holy Spirit discernment and prayer. Pastoral leadership can also place you on probationary status with clear restoration conditions, giving opportunity to address concerns.

## **After Forfeiture**

You lose spiritual privileges: participation in ordinances and congregational activities, pastoral care, advisory input, service opportunities, and pastoral counseling.

## **Restoration is possible and expected!**

The path depends on the nature of forfeiture, genuine repentance, demonstrated change, and pastoral discernment. Contact Pastor Nathan Harding to discuss restoration.

Pastoral leadership may inform the congregation of the names of those who have lost membership and the general reason for forfeiture, as Scripture requires in Matthew 18:15-20. This protects the

congregation from confusion, maintains transparency, and fulfills the biblical pattern of accountability within the body of believers. This is not punitive: it is the faithful application of Scripture for the health of the fellowship.

## Special Situations

**Probation:** Sometimes we place members on probation rather than immediate forfeiture, providing opportunity for correction with accountability. Conditions will be clearly communicated.

**Prior Knowledge Exceptions:** The Pastor may grant membership without the standard evaluation period based on prior knowledge of your spiritual walk from previous congregational involvement or personal acquaintance.

## Questions?

These standards, based on the Corporation's established documents and not to supersede them, maintain spiritual health and biblical integrity. They reflect our commitment to holy living, sound doctrine, and mutual accountability: not as burdensome rules but as the pathway to spiritual vitality and faithful witness.

Contact Pastor Nathan Harding to schedule a conversation. Clear communication maintains accountability and unity as we walk together in Christ.