

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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Q. If membership in a local church body is neither ordained nor prohibited by God, how can the church require that which God has not? Isn't that what Acts 15:28 and Colossians 2:8 teach?

A. It is mandated by God in His infallible Word the Bible. Acts 15:28 and Colossians 2:8 deal with the Mosaic ceremonial law, not with church membership.

Accountability

Accountability is a two-way street. You cannot ask for the church to be committed to you if you are not publicly committed to the leaders and the church. That is what membership is! **Membership is a public declaration of mutual accountability.** Acts 2:41,47 speak of *adding* to the church. What can that mean if people have not made a public commitment? How did the apostles know who was added? How can Paul tell the Corinthian church to put the sexually immoral man **out of the church** if they are not considered *in* the church? Look at **1 Corinthians 5:1-13, esp. vss. 12 & 13**: For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are **outside**? Do you not judge those who are **inside**? 13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore **put away** from yourselves the evil person.

Public Commitment

Membership is a public commitment to Jesus and His body, the church a declaration of heavenly citizenship Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ... **The public commitment is what counts in God's eyes.** This is why we call it a **Public Profession of Faith**. 1 Timothy 6:12 "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession **in the presence of many witnesses.**" Matthew 10:32,33 "Therefore **whoever confesses Me before men,** him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." Revelation 3:5 "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."

Written Records

Roll books are very important in the Bible. The genealogies of the Old Testament demonstrate the importance of written records of God's people. The idea of being *written* in the Lamb's book of life, while a metaphor, comes from something concrete, a roll book. Written records were very important in the ancient world. Even today citizenship papers prove one's commitment to one's country and people. In the church the written roll is just an accurate way of keeping track of membership as under-shepherds who care for the sheep. **Acts 13:48** "As many as were appointed to eternal life (**tetagne, noi** Luke 7:8 military authority, cf. Rom. 13:1 papyri evidence for "inscribe" or "enroll" Dan. 6:12; Ps 69:28

Pentecostal Example - Acts 2:41, 47

41. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were **added** [prosete,qhsan pass/aor/ind/3/pl] *to them.*" **47.** "And the Lord **added** [proseti,qei act/impf/ind/3/s] **to the church** daily those who were being saved." The Greek lexicon Liddell and Scott defines the Greek word translated "added" as: *to join* his party, or *to associate* one's opinion to another, i.e. agree with him; *to associate oneself to*, *to come in*, *submit*, or *to give one's assent*, *agree to* a thing.

The four questions for membership in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are simply our way of implementing this very important teaching of Jesus Christ, that every Christian should be connected

with the visible, organized church of our Lord Jesus Christ, by public profession of their faith in the risen Lord.

Psalms 87:6 The LORD records as he registers the peoples, "This one was born there."

Ezekiel 13:9 My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations. They shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

Ezra 2:61-63 Also, of the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, and the sons of Barzillai (who had taken a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name). 62 These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they were not found there, and so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. 63 The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim.

Nehemiah 7:64 These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.

Numbers 1:17-19 (cf. **11:26**) Moses and Aaron took these men who had been named, 18 and on the first day of the second month, they assembled the whole congregation together, who registered themselves by clans, by fathers' houses, according to the number of names from twenty years old and upward, head by head, 19 as the LORD commanded Moses. So he listed them in the wilderness of Sinai.

1 Chronicles 4:41 These, registered by name, came in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and destroyed their tents and the Meunites who were found there, and marked them for destruction to this day, and settled in their place, because there was pasture there for their flocks.

Hebrews 12:22-24 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled (NKJ registered) in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

1 Timothy 5:11-12 But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry 12 and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith.

Psalms 69:28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.