

Resignation of Church Membership
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It is the duty and responsibility of everyone to join and unite with Christ's church and not separate from it. We confess in the Belgic Confession:

Art. 28

We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and outside of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it; maintaining the unity of the Church; submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof.

Art. 29

Hereby the true Church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself.

Joining, uniting and remaining a member is a personal responsibility before God. It is something all believers ought to do but not something we should attempt to force them to do against their will. Just as we should not force a believer to become a member against his will, so we should not attempt to hold the membership of one who persistently desires to resign his membership. However, when a member wants to resign his membership, the elders should not give in easily or quickly. They must warn the member that resigning is a grievous sin. If, after repeated warnings and admonitions (at least two – see Titus 3:10) in which the grievous nature of the sin has been explained and that resigning one's membership is putting oneself outside the church as if one had been excommunicated, and that it will be announced to the congregation as such, the elders may acquiesce in the resignation (give in to without approving) and announce to the congregation that the individual is no longer a member.

It should be explained to the congregation that resigning one's membership is a grievous sin that puts one outside the church of Christ as if (in the case of a communicate member) they had been excommunicated, or (in the case of a baptized member) they had been excluded from membership.

Although a person may escape the process of church discipline by resigning his membership, he cannot escape the consequences of his sin before God. Those who commit such a sin should be the object of our continued prayers for their conversion and restoration to the church of Christ.

A possible announcement to the congregation might say,

The elders have acquiesced in the resignation of the membership of _____. Before doing this, the elders repeatedly warned him that resignation of membership is a grievous sin that puts people outside the church of Christ as if they had been excommunicated or (in the case of baptized members) excluded from membership by an act of church discipline. Because he has refused the warnings and admonitions of the elders and because we may not hold anyone's membership against his will, the elders have acquiesced in this resignation. We urge the congregation to pray for his conversion and restoration to the church of Christ.

It is best if such an announcement is read to the congregation by an elder, not printed in a bulletin and not recorded. Leave no record that can be spread around and might give rise to gossip or unnecessary prejudice against the individual.