

The Constitution

of Priory Park Baptist Church

Proposal 1: Associate Membership

CONGREGATION REVISION 1

February 14, 2026



Priory Park Baptist Church
8 Torch Lane
Guelph, ON N1G 1V6
Canada

Elders' Explanation of the Proposal

Overview

The proposal is to introduce 2 members subcategories: **Active Member** and **Associate Member**. The difference between the two are simple: Active Members uphold the duties of membership and are thus given voting privileges, and Associate Members are not.

The elders are proposing this change in direct response to some challenges we have been having in balancing the following two realities:

- ▶ We need to protect the integrity of our churchwide decision-making process by helping us have a quorum of members for our Congregational Business Meetings and ensuring only active participants in our church are speaking into the direction of our church.
- ▶ Simply removing inactive members from membership will almost always be felt by them as a rejection, cause hurt feelings, and almost certainly push them further away from the church and God.

Associate Membership is our attempt to balance these realities: removing voting privileges for inactive members while maintaining their feeling of belonging.

Key Analogy: A Leave of Absence

Associate Membership can be thought of as a "leave of absence." In a workplace, an employee might take a leave of absence from their job due to extenuating circumstances. They are still considered an employee and are readily welcomed back to the job at any time, but their job privileges are temporarily suspended for the time they are away. Associate Membership is similar. We wish to retain someone's status as a "member" if they are unable to fulfill the duties of membership. They are readily able to return to Active Membership at any time, but with the recognition that the privileges come with the duties.

50% Attendance

Our current Constitution states that a duty of membership is to "habitually attend the services of the church." This wording is very much open to interpretation. Thus, we are proposing a more concrete standard. In our minds, "habitually" means 75% of Sundays on average, but for the purpose of the Constitution we have reduced the standard to only 50% of Sundays.

Exceptions

The proposed revision stipulates that members will remain Active in 2 circumstances even if they do not meet the duties of membership: 1) suffering a health condition that prevents them from attending and 2) experiencing a personal or family crisis. Furthermore, the revision also calls on the Elders to "exercise grace and discernment in holding Active Members to the 50% attendance requirement." The spirit of this change is not to punish. It is to gracefully hold our members to a Godly standard.

Becoming an Associate Member

Members cannot be arbitrarily assigned Associate status. The proposed constitutional revision lays out a process whereby a member will need to show a pattern of less than 50% attendance of Sunday worship over 6 months. Even at that point Associate status is not immediate. The Elders will then discuss intentions with the inactive member and give them an additional 3 months return to active participation. Only then, after at least *9 months* of inactivity will people be assigned Associate status.

You will notice that the revised Constitution also stipulates that the discussion of intentions can happen after a member moves more than 45 minutes away. This is only to prevent us from

needing to wait 6 months before we suggest Associate status to someone that moves far away (e.g., to another province or a city far away). If a member is still attending regularly after moving 45 minutes away, they will retain Active status.

What happens to Associate Members?

In short: very little. The only difference between Active Members and Associate Members is the ability to vote at Congregational Business Meetings. Associate Members can remain that way indefinitely, and if they ever return to active participation, they will be able to regain Active Membership status (details in the Constitution revision). *They are not “kicked out” or excluded from participating in church life!* It is important to keep in mind that at Priory even non-members have very few barriers to their participation. One’s official membership status is the last thing on our minds when we are living the Christian life together, visiting one another, caring for one another, praying for one another, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will newcomers be eligible for Associate Membership?

No. Associate Membership is strictly for those who were once Active Members and can no longer uphold the duties of membership. The reason for this comes from our Biblical conviction that church membership means active engagement. It would be incompatible with the Bible’s teaching to expect nothing of those who want to officially join. We believe this will foster a culture of active engagement rather than a culture of passivity. Associate Membership, as described above, is more like a “leave of absence.” You wouldn’t hire an employee for them to immediately begin an indefinite leave of absence. It is there as a response to circumstances that arise after having already been actively engaged.

What about someone who is otherwise active in other areas of the church (e.g., small groups, serving, etc.) but does not attend worship services 50% of the time?

Remember that Associate Members are still members! What is at stake is who gets a vote to steer the direction of our church. Our worship service is the central hub of our community. It is where we gather as a whole community to learn, worship, serve, etc. The very Biblical meaning of membership is found in actively participating in community. Even our current Constitution acknowledges this by stipulating that members must habitually attend worship services. We do not believe that someone should be permitted to steer the direction of our church if they are not actively participating in the core gathering of our community. It is the member’s responsibility to prioritize the gathering!

What if someone is unable to attend Sunday worship because of their job or some other circumstance?

First of all, remember that there are 2 explicit exceptions to the 50% attendance standard: a health condition that prevents attendance, and a personal crisis. Second, remember that the Elders are expected to implement this with grace and discernment. Beyond that, we will repeat that this proposal is not about who gets to call Priory home and who gets to belong. An Associate Member is free to participate in all elements of church life. We’re simply saying that steering the direction of the church must come with active participation in our core gathering. How can someone make decisions for the church if they are not even present?

How will 50% attendance be determined? Is someone taking attendance? Do we “throw the book at them” if they are at 48% and not 50%?

50% is meant to be a general guideline. There is absolutely zero intention to take attendance or be nit-picky about whether they are 5-10% below the threshold. We foresee that most cases will be when it is very clear that they are falling below 50%. For example, when we look back on the last few months and can only think of a small handful of times they attended (or not at all), those are the kinds of situations this new policy is designed for. If someone is participating enough that we notice them being around roughly once every two weeks, that will be enough to satisfy the requirement.

Why does the conversation of inactivity happen after 6 months? Why would we wait so long to check in with someone who is not attending?

This proposal is not speaking to spiritual or pastoral care. Absolutely, we expect that within the 6 months of inactivity the member will have been checked in on by a variety of people. That would be the case for anyone part of our community whether they were an official member or not. Pastoral care standards are important, they're just not defined in the Constitution.

How does this proposal address people who are actively participating in the church and otherwise doing everything an Active Member would do, but not officially a member?

We hope you will agree that the requirements for membership are not burdensome. We expect that most believers who attend our church will find it very easy to become a member within their first few months. Thus, if someone does not become an official member, that will be their choice to forgo the opportunity to vote at Congregational Business Meetings and hold certain offices (e.g., Elder, Ministry Team Leader). We don't even mind if they come to be colloquially referred to as "members," especially if they are upholding the duties of membership. They'll just have to understand that voting comes with becoming an official Active Member.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments Follow

The following are the proposed revisions to the Constitution under this proposal. To view all the revisions from all the proposals in one document, see the document labeled "Complete Amended Constitution from Proposals #1-4".

- ▶ All major headings have been kept for context. If there is no text under a heading, that means there are no proposed changes for that section.
- ▶ Text in **BLACK** is exactly as it is in the current Constitution.
- ▶ Text in **RED** are the proposed amendments.
- ▶ Text in **BLUE** are section numbers that will be changed due to the proposals.
- ▶ **RED & BLUE TEXT WITH NO STRIKE THROUGH** is new text that is proposed to be **added**.
- ▶ **RED & BLUE TEXT WITH A STRIKE THROUGH** is current text that is proposed to be **deleted**.

1 Name

2 Affiliation

3 Purpose

4 Statement of Faith

5 Membership

5.1 Membership Qualifications

Membership in Priory Park Baptist Church shall have the following qualifications:

- a) Profess faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour
- b) Be baptized as a believer or have been baptized as an infant and confirmed as a believer
- c) Be in general accord with the faith and practices of Priory Park Baptist Church
- d) Demonstrates a willingness to uphold the Duties of Active Membership
- e) To the best of their ability, settle any outstanding matters of reconciliation in previous churches
- f) Not a member of another church (membership can be transferred by submitting a letter of transfer)

5.2 Membership Process

The Board of Elders will assess if a candidate member meets the Membership Qualifications. The candidate member will then be presented to the congregation by the Board of Elders during a Sunday worship service or at a Congregational Business Meeting. Written objections to their membership shall be received by the Board of Elders during the week following the announcement of candidacy. If no Biblically valid objections are received, the candidate shall be received into Active Membership during a Sunday worship service or Congregational Business Meeting.

5.3 Duties of Active Membership

An Active Member of the church is someone who upholds the following duties:

- a) Demonstrate a faithful walk with God
- b) Exercise his/her God-given gifts for the mutual benefit of the church
- c) Participate actively in the fellowship and work of the church, including Congregational Business Meetings
- d) Give regularly to the church for its support and ministries
- e) Follow the leadership of the Lead Pastor and Elders
- f) Attend Sunday worship services in-person at least 50% of Sundays

5.4 Active Membership

Active Members are members who actively uphold the Duties of Active Membership. They have voting privileges in Congregational Business Meetings.

If an Active Member A) does not attend Sunday worship services in-person at least 50% of Sundays in the previous 6 months or B) has moved a driving distance more than 45 minutes from the church, an Elder will meet with the member to assess their willingness to remain an Active Member. If the member desires to remain an Active Member, they will be given a 3-month "demonstration period" to demonstrate at least 50% attendance. If the member either A) expresses no desire to continue in Active Membership, B) does not respond to a request to meet with an Elder, or C) fails to attend Sunday worship services in-person at least 50% of Sundays in the 3-month "demonstration period", they will be designated as an Associate Member with written notice (if reachable).

The Board of Elders are expected to exercise grace and discernment in holding Active Members to the 50% attendance requirement during exceptional circumstances. Active Membership can be maintained if the member is A) suffering a health condition that prevents them from attending or B) experiencing a personal or family crisis.

5.5 Associate Membership

Associate Members are former Active Members who are not upholding the Duties of Active Membership. They are welcome to participate in the fellowship and work of the church, including Congregational Business Meetings, but do not have voting privileges. They also cannot hold leadership positions where Active Membership is a requirement.

Associate Members may return to Active Membership if they return to fulfilling the Duties of Active Membership. If the member has been an Associate Member for less than 18 months, they may be immediately restored to Active Membership at the discretion of the Board of Elders. If they have been an Associate Member for 18 months or longer, they will need to undergo the Membership Process to return to Active Membership.

5.6 Membership Termination

Those removed from membership for any reason shall receive written notice (if reachable) and may be restored to Active Membership by undergoing the Membership Process. Membership may be terminated in the following circumstances:

- a) By request: The member may request their membership be terminated
- b) By transfer letter: The member may request a letter of membership transfer to their new church.
- c) By death

~~5.1 — Membership Qualifications~~

~~5.1.1 — Confession of Faith~~

~~In accordance with the Word of God, all members are required to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in their hearts that He is risen from the dead. (Romans 10: 9,10)~~

~~5.1.2 — Baptism~~

~~According to the principle revealed in Acts 21:17-26, candidates for membership must have been baptized as believers or have been baptized as infants and confirmed as believers.~~

~~5.1.3 — Letters of Transfer~~

~~Members from other churches shall be asked to obtain letters of recommendation or dismissal from their previous churches.~~

~~5.1.4 — Congregational Approval~~

~~Recommendations for membership shall be submitted to the congregation by the Elders' Board at a Sunday service or at a congregational meeting. Written objections to membership of a candidate shall be received by the Board during the week following the announcement of candidacy. If no biblically valid objections are forthcoming, the candidate shall be received into membership the following Sunday.~~

~~5.2 — Privileges of Membership~~

~~a) — The primary role of the members shall be to serve as the ministers of the church as they reach out to unchurched people and care for the needs of one another within the church. Every member may participate fully in meetings that pertain to the membership of the church. Every member is entitled to one vote on all matters requiring a congregational vote. In some circumstances, the Elders may establish the appropriate process for voting. In such cases, the procedure outlined by the Elders shall be followed. Constitutional amendments which alter the meaning or intent of the constitution~~

~~b) — the annual budget~~

~~c) — the calling into office or extending of terms for pastors~~

~~d) — the authorization of members to represent the church in any official capacity not within their prescribed portfolio~~

~~5.3 — Duties of Members~~

~~Members of the church are expected to live under and abide by the Statement of Faith, Constitution and Policies and Procedures of Priory Park Baptist Church, be faithful in their walk with God, habitually attend the services of the church, give regularly for its support and ministries, and participate actively in its fellowship and work. Every member shall be expected to exercise his or her God-given gift(s) for the mutual benefit of all the members of the church body, and to follow the leadership of the Senior Pastor and Elders.~~

~~5.4 — Membership Termination~~

~~Those removed from membership for any reason shall receive written notice from the Church Clerk and may be restored to full membership according to the procedures outlined in Section 5.1. Membership may be terminated under the following circumstances:~~

~~5.4.1 Inactivity~~

~~If a member is not active in the church body for a period of a year and does not demonstrate an interest in continuing as a member, it shall be the responsibility of the Elders to contact that person. If the member indicates that he or she no longer wishes to be a part of the body, his or her membership shall be transferred or terminated.~~

~~5.4.2 Request~~

~~Termination of membership shall be granted upon a member's request. A letter of dismissal or recommendation shall be provided if the departing member desires. This letter shall state the form of his or her admission to membership in Priory Park Baptist Church.~~

5.5.7 Church Discipline

~~5.5.1 Discipline of Members~~

Priory Park Baptist Church shall make every effort to adhere to the principles of church discipline as set forth in the bible, particularly in Matthew 18:15-17. The guiding motivation behind church discipline is the commitment to love others in the context of truth. The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church, to edify believers by deterring sin, and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling, out of love, him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct. The aim of all church discipline shall be the full restoration of the believer in accordance with Galatians 6:1.

6 Congregational Meetings

7 Governance

8 General Regulations