



POLICY COMMITTEE

Best Practice

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON A PROCESS TO PERMIT
CONVICTED FELONS TO SERVE ON
TEAM OR SECRETARIAT**

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BEST PRACTICE TO PERMIT CONVICTED FELONS TO SERVE ON TEAM OR SECRETARIAT

PURPOSE: Since most communities will deal, at one time or another, with a convicted felon requesting to serve on a leadership position, the purpose of this 'Best Practice' paper is to provide some suggested guidelines to consider when confronted with this situation.

BACKGROUND: It's not uncommon for convicted felons to find salvation in Christ during their incarceration, participate in a Tres Dias weekend after their release, and then express a desire to be on team or to serve some role on the Secretariat. This group can also consist of Pescadores who commit a felony, serve their time, and then attempt to rejoin the community in a leadership role. The purpose will be to create a process by which the individual regains the trust of the community over a period of time.

- **IMPORTANT DEFINITION OF A LEADER:** For the purposes of Tres Dias, we consider anyone who takes on a formal role as a Servant-Leader within the Tres Dias ministry to be a Leader. This includes but is not limited to all team positions (including Auxiliaries and Chas) and all Secretariat positions which include elected and appointed positions, voting members, standing and ad hoc committee members, etc.
- **IMPORTANT EXCEPTION:** This paper does NOT apply to a convicted felon who wishes to participate on a Tres Dias weekend as a Candidate or Pilgrim. The only qualification for someone to attend a weekend, as per the Essentials, is one who "desires a closer relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior."
- **"GRANDFATHER" CLAUSE:** There may very well be convicted felons who have been part of the community, are well known and in good standing, and have been serving in leadership roles without issue for some time. In those cases it wouldn't make sense to subject them to these recommendations since restoration has already occurred. Obviously this is left to the discretion of the local Secretariat.

DISCUSSION: When dealing with an issue of this nature, there are three important factors to take into consideration:

- 1) **THE SPIRITUAL COMPONENT** (ie: God's Saving Grace and the sinner's repentance);
- 2) **THE SECULAR COMPONENT** (The impact this decision can have on the reputation of the local community and/or the greater Tres Dias Ministry);
- 3) **CONSIDERATION OF SAFETY AND WELL-BEING** of those in the community who might be at risk. Some examples might include pedophiles, rapists or other convicted sex offenders, con artists who went to prison for embezzling money from vulnerable groups such as the elderly, and those incarcerated for violent acts (gangs, drug dealers, etc).

As we look at this list, it becomes obvious that this is a complex issue with many moving parts and not a topic to be taken lightly. In addition, we do have some limitations:

- 1) We can only address those Pescadores whose history we are aware of. There could be others within our communities that we don't know about so obviously we can only deal with these situations as they come to light.
- 2) We are NOT in a position to judge a person's heart, that job belongs solely to God. In other words, it's not within our realm or calling to be "judge and jury". It is, however, our responsibility to do our due-diligence to make certain that, as stewards of this ministry, that we have made every effort to address the situations noted above (spiritual, secular and safety).

The remainder of this paper will serve to address those issues.

THE SPIRITUAL COMPONENT: The New Testament abounds with scriptures related to repentance and forgiveness. The problem, from our perspective, is that we have no way of knowing if a person's claimed repentance is from the heart or simply a tool used for manipulation. So although the individual's repentance is between them and God, we have the obligation to measure their fruits in an effort to make a determination as to their eligibility to serve in a leadership position.

THE SECULAR COMPONENT: Unfortunately, many Christians are no different than our secular counterparts when it comes to gossiping, judging, backbiting, and making decisions without all of the facts. For instance, if someone learns that a convicted rapist is serving on a team, the word could quickly be disseminated within the community, as well as outside of it, resulting in a negative opinion of the community or the ministry. As such, it will be important to create guidelines that, when shared with the community, will assure all involved that proper steps toward restoration have been thoughtfully planned and followed.

THE SAFETY COMPONENT: Safety issues can be real or imagined, but either way perception becomes reality so both need to be considered. This will require discussion at the local level as to what, if any, precautions need to be in place when one of these individuals, after going through the steps at the end of this report, is participating on a team, on the Secretariat, or even at a Tres Dias function. For instance, some examples might include:

- A convicted pedophile should not be permitted near children unsupervised
- A convicted rapist should be monitored for inappropriate comments or actions
- Someone who cons the elderly should not be permitted to spend time alone with them during any Tres Dias activity
- Etc.

It's also important to realize that, to the best of our ability, we need to maintain the person's integrity and try to be as nurturing and mindful as possible as we make these decisions. This person, if sincere, has already had his/her self-esteem pretty well destroyed and their dignity has most likely been seriously damaged. Remember that we are trying to do God's Work with love, mercy and grace while being "wise as serpents and gentle as doves."

RECOMMENDED PROCESS: When a community learns of an individual who meets the criteria of this paper (ie: Pescadore or Pilgrim convicted of a felony), the following steps are designed to be a progressive process toward full restoration:

- 1) The person should be personally interviewed in an effort to determine their sincerity, and to be advised of the steps they will need to take in order to be fully restored into the community.
- 2) The person should be committed to regular church attendance; ideally serving in some sort of servant-leader role.
- 3) The person's service should be confirmed by his/her pastor. In addition, the pastor should be asked if he/she recommends that person for team service.
 - a. This should include specific questions related to that person's situation. Although a written recommendation is preferable, a conversation by phone or in person (perhaps with an email follow-up to document the content of the conversation) would be sufficient
- 4) The person should be in an active Reunion Group for a specific period of time (such as 6 months) and the other members of that group should be asked for their recommendations.
- 5) When all this information is obtained, it should be evaluated by the group or committee delegated by the Secretariat to oversee team selection. At that time the group/committee should have a serious conversation based on the facts received. Only when they are in agreement should the person be permitted to serve on team.
- 6) If the decision is made to permit the person to serve on a team, any prior team experiences should be removed and they should begin in various Auxiliary / Cha position; gradually working their way to serve at a table, and ultimately to give a rollo. And only then, when they have met all of the necessary team requirement, as per the community's policy, should they be considered for the role of Rector or other role of formal leadership.

In the event the person is requesting to serve on the Secretariat, we suggest that the President or Chairman (or their designee) follow the above procedure. And prior to granting voting status on the Secretariat, consideration should be made to have them serve on a standing or ad hoc committee for some period of time before they can earn voting status.

SUMMARY: We need to approach each situation with love, mercy, grace, wisdom and insight; remembering that our goal, when appropriate, is full restoration within the community. What makes this difficult is:

- 1) We're trying to determine the sincerity of the person's repentance by measuring their fruit
- 2) Every situation is different: This includes the individual's situation as well as the fact that every community's policies regarding serving on team and Secretariat is different.

As such, these guidelines are designed to provide a skeleton on which each community can modify as needed to meet their own situation.

Having said that, this is a BEST PRACTICE PAPER and NOT a Position Paper or Policy Statement. In other words each community is free to use part or all these insights as they deem appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,

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Policy Chair

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