



THE GATHERING

Why Become A Member?



Got Questions ???

This booklet is designed to answer questions about church membership at *The Gathering*:

1. Why become a church member?
2. Is church membership in the Bible?
3. What are the qualifications?
4. How do I become a church member?
5. What would I become a member of ... what is the vision of *The Gathering*?
6. Is *The Gathering* a registered charity? What governs our organization?
7. Do the Mennonite Brethren drive horse and buggies ... what do the Mennonite Brethren believe?

Why Become A Church Member?

Some people stay away from church membership because they do not understand it or they don't know why they should bother; others feel it's an automatic admission to heaven. To the skeptics first, church membership is not to be feared, but a commitment to serve and to journey in relationship with others with whom you will spend eternity. Check out some of the benefits to church membership below. To the second group, I just want to clear something up ... membership in a local church is not the means of joining THE true church; it has nothing to do with one's salvation (going to heaven). Salvation (choosing to walk with Christ and accept His gift of salvation) should always precede one's application for joining a local church. A person does not need membership to be a Christian but needs to be a Christian to have membership.

The principle advantages of membership in a local church are:

- 1) You gain a sense of belonging and closer tie of commitment. Membership can be catalyst to unity and love among believers. (1 John 4:11–12)
- 2) You can participate in governing the local church, which enhances conduct of our business and protection of *The Gathering* in our various involvements, whether they be legal or otherwise. (Romans 12:17)
- 3) Membership enables the local church to develop standards and goals which will encourage you to aspire to in your journey with Christ and others.
- 4) Membership encourages a greater sense of stewardship and commitment. By committing to the church you are joining others of like mind in giving of your time, talents, and treasure to something you believe in (something larger than what you could achieve alone).
- 5) It provides an opportunity for public confession of one's faith. This is not the only way to bear witness but it is an effective means by which one can testify. We take our stand alongside others of similar beliefs in a local congregation. (Hebrews 10:25)
- 6) It gives greater opportunity for dedication to a task. The task is, of course, to make Christ known, to take or send His gospel wherever possible. It is an endless one and is beyond the ability of a single individual. A co-operative effort is so much more effective – where each person is given a small part in a great program. When Christians are dedicated to one common task and pool their efforts together faithfully contributing according to their talents and gifts, then a much greater impact is made on the community.

Is Church Membership in the Bible?

The short answer is yes. The word “church” is translated from the Greek word “ecclesia” in the New Testament and literally means “an assembly of called out ones”.

This term is applied to:

a) The Universal Church which is the whole body of believers on earth (Colossians 1:18). A person enters that fellowship through the new birth. It is the Lord who adds to that church. Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:13 – “for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.” This is the one true church composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

b) The Whole Body of Believers in One City. Then tidings came unto the ears of the church, which is in Jerusalem. (Acts 11:22)

c) The Local Church or Congregation. While there is a church universal, the Bible also recognizes the existence of local churches or groups of churches. “Likewise greet the church that is in their home.” (Romans 16:5) These churches were capable of making decisions, sending out workers, raising funds, enlarging the fellowship, and appointing leadership.

The local church (i.e. *The Gathering*) then is a smaller fellowship of believers of “like faith” within a community who gather together regularly for worship, teaching, and fellowship. Membership in this church is Biblical in the sense that believers in the early church made every effort to become part of a local congregation and invest fully in the life of the community called the local church. When the Apostle Paul was converted he was quick to endeavour to align himself with the believers first at Damascus (Acts 9:18 – 19) then at Jerusalem upon his arrival there. “He assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.” (Acts 9:26) Paul’s effort to join himself with other believers was the natural consequences of his conversion.

What Are The Qualifications?

A person qualifies for membership at *The Gathering* if he/ she:

1. has experienced the 'new birth' through repentance and personal faith in Jesus Christ and shows evidence that they are a child of God, born of the Holy Spirit;
2. is willing to accept the spiritual oversight of the Lead Pastor, Associate Pastors, and the Elders and is willing to follow their lead unless it is plainly contrary to the written Word of God;
3. Agrees with the Confession of Faith and is willing to strive to live out its principles (including a willingness to be water-baptized upon confession of faith);

A copy of the Confession of Faith can be found through *The Gathering* website, under 'About Us' subheading 'What We Believe'; or directly at the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren website @ <http://www.mbconf.ca/believe/confession/index.en.html>; or ask for a printed copy at the church.

A devotional on water baptism can be obtained by emailing info@thegatheringottawa.com or by asking for one on Sunday.

4. embraces the purpose and vision of the Church;

A copy of the vision is contained in this document.

5. affirms all of the provisions contained in the Constitution; and

A copy of the constitution can be obtained by emailing info@thegatheringottawa.com or by asking for one on Sunday.

6. is willing to commit himself/herself to the Church by word, regular participation, tithing/giving, fulfilling the responsibilities of membership (see constitution), and governing their lives according to Scripture.

A devotional on financial stewardship can be obtained by emailing info@thegatheringottawa.com or by asking for one on Sunday.

How Do I Become a Member?

A person becomes a member at *The Gathering* by qualifying for membership, applying for membership by filing out the application below, and having that application approved by joint resolution (more than 2/3 of the Elders and the Lead Pastor are in favour).

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____

Postal Code _____

Home Phone _____

Work Phone _____

Cell Phone _____

1. Tell us the story of how you came to repentance and personal faith in Jesus Christ.

2. What evidence is there in your life, that the Holy Spirit is working in your life, and that you are a child of God?

3. Are you willing to accept the spiritual oversight of the Lead Pastor and the Elders and follow their lead unless it is plainly contrary to the written Word of God? Yes / No

4. Have you read the complete Confession of Faith of the Mennonite Brethren Conference in Canada and do you agree with it? Yes / No

If no, please elaborate:

How Do I Become A Member Continued

If yes, are you willing to strive to live out the Confession of Faith's principles ? Yes / No

If no, please elaborate

5. Have you been water baptized upon the confession of your faith, by full immersion as an adult? Yes / No

If no, are you willing to be? Yes / No

If no, please elaborate

6. Do you embrace the purpose and vision of The Gathering as outlined in this document? Yes / No

If no, please elaborate

If yes, how do you see yourself being involved?

7. Do you affirm all of the provisions contained in the Constitution? Yes / No

If no, please elaborate

8. Are you willing to commit yourself to The Gathering by word, regular participation, tithing/giving, fulfilling the responsibilities of membership, and governing your life according to Scripture? Yes / No

If no, please elaborate

Signature

Date

What Would I Become A Member Of ... The Vision Of *The Gathering*

We believe this section of the document is the most crucial to your choice in joining our church. Let us explain, in 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul wrote: “*Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose* (NLT).” It's easy for a church to get 'out of focus'. When that happens, blurred vision causes ineffective efforts and competing agendas. In turn, this can easily generate disagreement, discord, and division. To avoid this, every church needs to openly declare its mandate, its mission, its means, and its methodology. This in turn helps avoid confusion and disappointed expectations.

While the New Testament provides an overview of how the early church operated, much of the detail has been left in the hands of each local congregation to structure their ministries in a way that they feel maximizes their service to God, each other, and their community. Hence, different congregations have a variety of styles and structures of Christian ministry — something that enables them to serve a variety of people in ways that meet their differing needs. Although there may not be one absolute way of 'doing community', it is important that each church be unified in its own unique vision and style.

At *The Gathering* we strongly believe that when you're busy rowing the boat, you don't have time to rock it. And so we call those people who would like to make this church their spiritual home to rally around the foundational principles contained within this vision and become committed to making it happen. We realize that our philosophy of ministry might not be perfect – that's why we are always open to change. But we also realize that, perfect or not, as a congregation we need to be fiercely committed to moving in the same direction *together*.

There is something else we should add. This document is a work in progress. It captures the crucial, unchanging foundation and pillars that our church is built upon, but also deals with issues of style and details of structure that may need to be reworked or expanded as we grow and develop as a congregation. To borrow and adapt an analogy from Jesus (Matthew 9:17) we maintain an uncompromising commitment to the new wine of the Good News message of Jesus, we must hold that message within flexible wine skins, able to expand and adapt as circumstances change. Still, the bulk of the content of this vision is absolutely foundational to our church's *modus operandi* and important for everyone at The Gathering to read, remember, and implement.

- 1) Our Vision Of A Preferred Future
- 2) The Three Relationships That Fuel Our Church
- 3) What We Want It To Be Like
- 4) Making Room For Life
- 5) Home Church Philosophy
- 6) Barnabas Awards
- 7) Our Team

What Would I Become A Member Of ... The Vision Of *The Gathering* Continued



THE GATHERING QUESTION ... THINK ... GROW

Matthew 18:20
"Where 2 or more gather in My name,
I will be in their midst."

Our Vision of a Preferred Future ...

1) *GENUINE Relationships with Christ* (2 Corinthians 13:5)

We envision:

- people getting up in the morning with their first thoughts of the day on the Lord. As they shower, they magnify Him, and as they get dressed, they pray for family/friends.
- people engaged in authentic community in Home Churches, where a purposeful focus on the application of Sunday's message and the establishment of genuine relationships transform people's lives.
- people applying one new faith principle a month in their journey, with different aspects shared each week through the message, take home study notes, and Home Churches.
- genuinely transformed lives creating a desire in others to explore a relationship with Christ.
- people sharing their stories with one another because they feel like they belong and because the church is building them up with hope, not making them feel badly about themselves.
- redemption, healing, and wholeness occurring in people as relevant issues are discussed.
- people walking into worship, and His presence is so strong that they repent in His love.

2) *AUTHENTIC Relationships with Our Community* (Acts 1:8)

We envision:

- people in our church being coached on using their volunteerism and workplaces as their ministry.
- people being rewarded at the church in an annual red carpet event for living out the fruits of the spirit in ministry outside of the church (volunteer roles in the community and their workplaces).
- people with time to spend with neighbours, colleagues, and friends made in the community because church has simplified their life, not complicated it.
- people in our community connecting through our bi-monthly pre-evangelism events, and for those who didn't come, they feel a sense of missing out.
- a place where people feel that they can be real with others and share where they're at.

What Would I Become A Member Of ... The Vision Of *The Gathering* Continued

3) **SPIRITUAL Relationships In Our Families**

(Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

We envision:

- families talking about the message over lunch, engaging one another on their faith journey because they learned about the same topic.
- families joining Home Churches and holding one another accountable in love.
- kids and parents getting up on Sundays excited about going to church to see what Jesus might do this week, because church isn't boring.
- daily routines changing as families pray and talk about God's Word together.

The Three Relationships That Fuel Our Church ...

Our dream is to create a place bursting with opportunity for people to take one step closer to Christ & others each day. We plan to fuel (GAS – Genuine, Authentic, Spiritual) this dream by building 3 types of relationships:

1) *GENUINE Relationships With Christ*

2 Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves to see if your faith is really genuine. Test yourselves. If you cannot tell that Jesus Christ is among you, it means you have failed the test (NLT).”



We believe, as Paul said, that we are daily being saved (1Cor.1:18). Yes, the work was finished at the cross, but for every one of us discipleship is a process. It is a journey in our lives of discovering more about who God is and how He wants us to live. We at '*The Gathering*' desire to pursue this deeper understanding of how God works in our world, by fostering authentic relationships where real spiritual growth can occur. That is why we believe real church occurs in our homes where people can engage the message and one another: to question, think, and grow.

How we will strive to build genuine relationships with Christ ... Challenging people on only one topic a week through a variety of media: a coffee time before service with 2 discussion questions on your cup relating to the message; deep meaningful worship; weekly Christ-centred teaching during Sunday service; 3 weekly take-home questions to discuss with family/friends over lunch; sermon notes for personal times with God; and weekly 'small gatherings' (Home Church) to go deeper on the topic.

What Would I Become A Member Of ... The Vision Of *The Gathering* Continued

2) **AUTHENTIC Relationships With Our Community**

Acts 1:8

“But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere – in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (NLT).”



We have a dream that every member of our church will be involved in a volunteer capacity outside of the church. There are a lot of great churches with great programs, but our dream is to be a church without programs for ourselves.

We want ‘*The Gathering*’ to be an integration of the church into the Riverside South area. Jesus said go into the entire world (Matt.28:19-20) ... and so our desire is to go to people, not ask them to come to us.

How we will strive to build authentic relationships in our community ... Bimonthly social events in the community, for the community; greeters on Sundays to talk to people as they come in; a coffee time before service to connect with people; a view that real church occurs each week in our homes (smaller gatherings) as we discuss the Sunday message and care for one another; an annual celebration of volunteers in our community.

3) **SPIRITUAL Relationships In Our Families**

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

“And you must think constantly about these commandments I am giving you today. You must teach them to your children and talk about them when you are at home or out for a walk; at bedtime and first thing in the morning. (TLB)”



We want to strengthen families by seeing the whole family love coming to church and growing spiritually (Ecc.4:12). Yet, we realize attending a service together doesn’t make family members connect about spiritual topics, so we don’t even have them sitting together in service.

How does this work, we believe that by keeping things fresh for everyone in the family, it will foster spiritual conversations at home. Jesus wasn’t boring; He was on the cutting edge of His time (Matt.9:17). He was ‘always fresh’ like Tim Horton’s, so the service each family member attends is designed to be exciting for them. If our dream is realized, family members will discuss weekly questions about the message because the message engaged each of them in their own way.

What Would I Become A Member Of ... The Vision Of *The Gathering* Continued

How we will strive to build spiritual relationships with family ... Simultaneous generation-specific Sunday services on the same sermon topic. We will start with kids and adult services with the dream of adding a youth service. We will connect with each generation through the use of media, pop-culture, and issues related to their life stage. In the weekly bulletin, 3 questions will be provided for families to discuss the topic over lunch that day.

What We Want To Be Like ...

Imagine a place where you can come just as you are, but may just change for the better ...



Sounds a bit like a great coffee house. Well this is God's vision for a community called the church. Unfortunately, when you say the word 'church' today a lot of people don't immediately think of something this inviting, fun and life changing. We at '*The Gathering*' really love this original vision of what church should be and invite you to be a part of it.

Envision the experience ...

- We want our coffee house to be like Starbucks or Second Cup, not a McDonald's drive thru.
- We want our Sunday services to be like a great movie that makes you laugh, cry, think, question, and grow, not a private club you feel excluded from.
- We want our approach to a spiritual journey to be like the Volkswagen slogan 'Drivers wanted', not a Volvo, where people want to stay safe and secure.
- We want our Home Church experience to be like a family experience: the TV show "Friends", not "The Osbornes".
- We want our technology on Sunday morning to run like an impressive Hummer, not a broken down Beamer.



We have a dream to be a church where people are truly valued, where they feel at home and they belong. We want a church that is relevant and addresses issues the average person is facing. We want a church that cares about people and our community in tangible ways.

We want a church that isn't boring and stuck in the past. We want a church that doesn't make people feel badly about themselves, but rather, gives them hope. We want our gatherings to be exciting, where children and parents love to be and feel welcome.

What Would I Become A Member Of ... The Vision Of *The Gathering* Continued

Making Room For Life ... Simplifying Church

Have you ever been at church and heard a really great message, but couldn't even remember what topic it was on the next day when you were trying to tell your friend about it?

For most of us, our lives are filled with a lot of competing noise, information over load, and people/tasks pulling us in multiple directions. Listening to a number of different messages each week at the church (Bible Study, Sunday Morning, Sunday Evening, Small Group, Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry, etc.), implementing these new truths into our lives, or changing these different things about ourselves can really seem like a lot of work. In fact, church can very easily become a religious ritual, where we go through the motions, but we never seem to go forward in our walk with God.

Our lives are busy enough. Our microwave, drive-thru, prepackaged meal society needs to be slowed down and simplified, not made more complicated by our church experience. That is why, at *The Gathering* we believe that a new wine skin discipleship plan is needed: a plan that isn't about religious ritual, but is based on building the three key relationships into our lives; a plan that makes sense to a drive-thru, call me on my cell phone, high speed internet world; a plan that simplifies life and doesn't complicate it.

That is why we have chosen to do church as simply as we can. One Service a week for each age group. A built in devotional time each week to talk as a family about spiritual matters. One commitment a week outside of Sunday to joining a Home Church where we can build meaningful relationships that will help us with the rest of our lives. In fact, to make things even simpler, we will only focus on ONE topic a month (Sunday messages, Kids Gathering Services, Coffee Time Questions on Sundays, Family Devotional Questions, and Home Church), so that you can focus on building relationships in your life that will help you to implement a deeper understanding of that one truth each month.

What Would I Become A Member Of ... The Vision Of *The Gathering* Continued

Home Church ... There's No Place Like Home

The earliest Christ-followers met together in homes to live life and do church together. It was a vibrant, interactive community where everyone had a role to play. At *The Gathering*, we want to get back to this original vision. Real church is not about facing the same direction while watching a paid professional holy man;—it's about turning our chairs inward to face one another. Only then can we take off our masks and do the real work of building authentic, life-changing relationships.

Our hearts desire at *The Gathering* is that every member of our church will become a part of a Home Church.

A Place To Belong

Think of Home Church as your spiritual family. It is a safe place where you can be real, whether you are a seasoned Christ-follower or just checking out Jesus for the first time. Home Church is the best place to develop lasting friendships and make your own unique contribution to the community.

A Place To Grow

If you're looking to go deeper in your spiritual life then Home Church is the place for you. You'll have the chance to dig into Sunday's teaching, connect with God through worship and prayer, and be challenged to live out the teachings of Jesus in everyday life.

A Place To Love

Home Church is where we experience what it means to really love people. It is a place to care for one another's needs. But also a place to reach out beyond ourselves and bring Christ's love in practical ways to our neighbourhoods and to the world.

Ultimately, we want you to enjoy being part of a spiritual family where people of all ages and stages can grow together. That's why at *The Gathering* you won't find specific groups for singles or couples, men or women. The best way to choose a group is to pick the one that is near to you, on a night that's convenient. Find out how to join a group near you on the web or at Sunday services.



**What Would I Become A Member Of ...
The Vision Of *The Gathering* Continued**

Imagine yourself making a real difference ...

The Barnabas Awards

Once a year we plan to roll out the red carpet and reward anyone in our community who is making the Riverside South Area a better place to live. A no strings attached event in our community for our community. We want to help make our community a better place to live.

Jesus never asked us to come to heaven, He came to earth, lived amongst us, and redeemed even the hardest to reach areas. That is why these awards will be given out to people both inside our church and people who don't even attend church who are exemplifying the fruits of the spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control) in their workplaces and volunteer capacities outside of the church. (Anyone can be nominated for one of these awards on our website.)

We at *the Gathering* have a dream to see people compelled by the love of God to give freely and liberally to others. Jesus said "no greater love has any person, than to lay down his/her life (in practical ways) for a friend (John 15:13)." That is why we are doing the Barnabas Awards with no strings attached, and giving people an opportunity to encourage someone else for making their life, just a little bit better.

We at *the Gathering* have a dream that people in our community would see our faith in action; making a difference in practical ways in their lives. That is why, in addition to these annual awards we will also be offering regular coaching sessions and one-on-one coaching to people on how to use their volunteer roles in the community and workplaces as a venue for effective and life giving ministry.

... journey with us to make a difference

Is *The Gathering* a registered charity? And What governs our organization?

Is The Gathering a Registered Charity?

The Gathering is currently in the application process for becoming a registered charitable organization. *The Gathering* has a legal constitution of its own, a child protection plan, and a privacy policy all required by law for charitable organizations, as well as insurance.

Currently, we function as a subsidiary of Newlife church our brother/sister Mennonite Brethren Church in Orleans. Therefore, although we are not yet a registered charity we are able to provide charitable tax receipts through our partnership with Newlife Church.

What Governs Our Organization?

The Gathering is a church plant of the Canadian/Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren [<http://www.mbconf.ca/index.en.html>] and therefore is governed as a church plant until such time as it has become self-sufficient. However, *The Gathering* also has a legal constitution of its own which governs its affairs. A copy of this constitution can be obtained by emailing info@thegatheringottawa.com or by asking for one on Sunday.

Do the Mennonite Brethren drive horse and buggies ... what do the Mennonite Brethren believe?

The Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches

The Gathering is no lone ranger.

We are a part of a denomination called the Mennonite Brethren, MB for short.

Now, I know what you might be thinking: "I thought Mennonites drove horses and buggies and the Brethren were ultra- conservative." Well, the MBs are neither of these. We watch TV, drive cars, and believe in keeping up with the times. The MBs are a different Anabaptist denomination, originally founded in Germany when many churches came together to tear down denominational walls and celebrate the basic truths about Christ. So, we celebrate the heritage and vision of our ancestors to be non-denominational in nature, realizing that the work of Jesus Christ in the larger Kingdom of God is really what matters.

We are open to people of all or no denominational background to celebrate this journey with us.

Please feel free to check out more about our beliefs and affiliation with the Mennonite Brethren: www.mbconf.ca

A copy of the Confession of Faith can be found through our website, under 'About Us' subheading 'What We Believe'; directly at the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren website @ <http://www.mbconf.ca/believe/confession/index.en.html> or ask for a printed copy at the church.



The Gathering Publication
Rev. Chris Stevens
(613) 314-6376
info@thegatheringottawa.com
www.thegatheringottawa.com