

**Guiding Principles and Procedures of  
The Gathering Church**

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This document serves as a supplement to The Gathering Church Bylaws. It contains major policies and procedures that provide guidance to Council and that require approval of the Church membership at a General Meeting.

## **Part 1 - Purpose of The Gathering Church**

**1.1 The Gathering Church** (the “Church”) is a community of Christians who participate in God’s Kingdom by organizing and maintaining a Mennonite Brethren congregation whose Members live as faithful and loving disciples of Jesus Christ, provide Christian fellowship and are witnesses for the Gospel both in local and global communities.

The mission of The Gathering Church is to be, make, and grow disciples of Jesus Christ in Abbotsford and everywhere.

The Church accomplishes its mission by:

1. Proclaiming the good news of the of the Kingdom of God and demonstrating compassion and love for others as outlined by the Mennonite Brethren faith expressed in the Confession of Faith of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches;
2. Establishing, maintaining and supporting a worshipping community that consistently seeks to learn more about the meaning of discipleship;
3. Supporting individuals and organizations who are engaged in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ including the establishment of Mennonite Brethren congregations;
4. Creating a caring community that includes teaching and training enabling all those participating in The Gathering Church community to become faithful and mature disciples of Jesus Christ;
5. Supporting and maintaining ministries that care for the needs of the community in the name and manner of Christ;
6. Supporting and maintaining ministries that engage in peacemaking, reconciliation and conflict resolution;
7. Collecting and receiving contributions, gifts, legacies, bequests and endowments, consisting of money or property, whether real, personal or mixed.

## **Part 2 - Changed Lives (Making Disciples)**

**2.1** As the participants of The Gathering Church community live out its purpose and values, one should expect to experience personal discipleship and community transformation, and to see it in others. People who come in contact with the Church will experience life change through Jesus Christ and become increasingly effective in the stewardship of their lives. As the vision of the Church is realized, then

1. People in the surrounding community will become believers in Jesus Christ and will join this body of believers.
2. Believers who join the Church will experience a supportive community of believers and will become mature followers of Jesus Christ equipped to live out His calling on their lives. Accordingly, the goal of the Church is that:
  - a. Believers will grow in Christian maturity (Ephesians 4:11-16), in the fruit of the Spirit.
  - b. Believers will pray personally and corporately.
  - c. Believers will worship God, individually and corporately.
  - d. Believers will study and learn the Bible and apply biblical truths to their lives.
  - e. Believers will cultivate relationships with other believers that promote Christ-likeness.
  - f. Believers will understand and utilize their spiritual gifts in ministry to others.
  - g. Believers will own the ministry of the church.
  - h. Believers will reach out to others in word and deed as representatives of the Gospel.

Through the efforts of this community of Christian believers, others in select communities around the world, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, will respond to Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and grow in their faith, make disciples and start new churches.

## **Part 3 - Decision-Making and Leadership**

### **3.1 Principles for Decision-Making and Leadership Structures**

1. Decision-making structures and practices must be consistent with Evangelical-Anabaptist

theological convictions and congregational polity.

2. Decision-making structures are always a means to an end, never the end itself. They must enable individuals so that the energy and vision of the Church community can be unleashed for ministry. The effectiveness of decision-making structures needs to be measured by the degree to which they enable a group to accomplish its desired outcomes.
3. Spiritual maturity, godly character, and competency in leadership are the most important criteria for the selection of leaders.
4. The primary mandate for which Council members are accountable is to ensure effective governance on behalf and for the benefit of the entire Gathering Church community and not as “representatives” for a specific segment or as a platform to promote personal views.
5. Delegated responsibility must always be accompanied by the necessary authority for decision-making, and by appropriate mechanisms of accountability.

### 3.2 The Purpose of Leadership

1. **DEMONSTRATES EQUALITY AND SERVICE** - all individuals are equal in the community and mutually committed to the lordship of Jesus Christ, and to serving one another.
2. **EMBODIES SERVICE** - all individuals are gifted differently and called to serve the community in unique ways, including roles of formal and informal leadership.
3. **LISTENS, ENGAGES and PERSUADES** - leadership is exercised through listening, involvement, engagement and persuasion rather than relying on positional power (Mark 10:42-44).
4. **PROVIDES CLARITY** - positional roles serve the community by providing clarity for an individual’s responsibility, accountability and decision-making rather than only serving as the means of exercising power.
5. **DEMONSTRATES GIFTING** - people in formal leadership roles have demonstrated the gifts of leadership (Ephesians 4:11) and exercise their gifts in mutual submission to one another.
6. **FOSTERS COMMUNITY** - the purpose of leadership is to create the conditions for a healthy, diverse and dynamic community.
7. **ORIENTS TOWARDS MINISTRY** - The primary purpose of every church leadership body is to enable and empower all those persons who are part of The Gathering Church community to participate actively in effective ministry.
8. **RESOURCES AND EMPOWERS LEADERS** - In order for leaders of the Church to

experience empowerment and freedom to lead they will be provided with (a) clearly defined roles and organizational structures, (b) the necessary authority and accountability to carry out their delegated responsibilities, (c) encouragement for personal and skill development, and supportive personal relationships.

### **3.3 The Role of Council**

1. The Council is accountable to the congregation for creating the conditions necessary for the achievement of the Church's mission, and for the effective governance and management of the Church. They are to use their leadership gifts and wisdom to oversee all activities of the Church. They may delegate certain responsibilities to others. They are the "keepers of the vision" and therefore lead the Church in major decision-making and strategic initiatives.
2. The primary responsibility of every Council member is to act in the best interests of the entire Church community.
3. The Council shall fulfill all responsibilities outlined in the Bylaws, and ensure that there is adequate oversight and that risk management policies are in place for the management of all Church operations and ministries.
4. The Council is responsible for ensuring (directly or through delegation) that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place for all Church activities including staffing, finance, ministry and all other operations of the Church.
5. In partnership with the Pastoral Lead Team and through the engagement with the membership, Council will actively manage and champion the vision of the Church to be realized through the development and implementation of the Ministry Plan.
6. The Council is responsible to ensure that the Church is effectively forming Jesus-following disciples.

### **3.4 Relationship between Congregation and Council**

The Council is elected by the Church membership, but is accountable to the organization as a whole for all activities of the Church including vision, spiritual health, ministries and organizational management.

1. Members grant authority to the Council for the ongoing operations and ministries of the Church.
2. Council has an obligation to communicate regularly with the Members of the Church on its activities and on relevant matters.

3. Council will speak to the membership as a single entity.
4. The membership will exercise its authority by choosing leaders with appropriate gifting to serve on Council.
5. Council will regularly seek input and engagement from those participating in the Church community on significant matters pertaining to the church.
6. Council members are responsible to serve the whole participating Church community rather than to represent any group or personal interest.

### **3.5 Role of Pastoral Lead Team**

The Pastoral Lead Team is the primary body responsible for the ongoing management and ministries of the church. The Pastoral Lead Team is led by the Lead Pastor.

1. The Pastoral Lead Team is formed by the Lead Pastor in consultation with Council. In partnership with the Council and through the engagement with the membership, the Pastoral Lead Team will create and shepherd the vision of the Church.
2. The Pastoral Lead Team is responsible for the operations and ministries of the Church on behalf of Council.
3. A primary responsibility of the Pastoral Lead Team is to mobilize and equip all individuals in the church community for ministry.
4. The Pastoral Lead Team may include salaried pastoral staff as well as non-salaried members of the Church.
5. As required, the Pastoral Lead Team will delegate responsibilities for managing current and initiating new ministries to other individuals and/or committees.

### **3.6 Relationship between Council and the Pastoral Lead Team**

For the spiritual and operational health of The Gathering Church community, it is important that the Council and Pastoral Lead Team work in close partnership. Accordingly,

1. The Pastoral Lead Team works within the strategic vision and Ministry Plan of the Church.
2. The Pastoral Lead Team will conduct its activities in alignment with any policies and guidelines created by the Church and by Council.
3. Council will delegate to the Pastoral Lead Team the operations and ministries of the Church and the Pastoral Lead Team will provide regular reporting to Council.

4. The Pastoral Lead Team will seek Council's guidance on important aspects of its activities.
5. Council and the Pastoral Lead Team will strive to remain in harmony on matters of spiritual and operational health of the Church.
6. Council will routinely assess the performance and activities of the Pastoral Lead Team and will provide ongoing supportive feedback.
7. The Lead Pastor will be present as a non-voting member of Council.
8. Other Pastoral Lead Team members may also be present at Council, but not as voting members of Council.
9. Council will ensure that the Pastoral Lead Team is adequately resourced for its ongoing activities.
10. The Council will delegate the creation of the Ministry Plan, from the Church's Vision Statement, to the Lead Pastor with the Pastoral Lead Team.
11. The Council and the Pastoral Lead Team will partner to ensure the approval, oversight and achievement of the annual Ministry Plan.

### **3.7 Role of the Discernment Team**

The Discernment Team is the key body that ensures the Church recruits, and adequately discerns for approval, gifted leaders in all Member-elected positions. The Discernment Team may also be used by Council and the Pastoral Lead Team to identify and call people to non-elected leadership roles.

1. Members of the Discernment Team are selected annually by the Council and approved by the membership at the Annual General Meeting.
2. The Discernment Team, which should be a minimum of three (3) persons, will be made up of both non-Council members as well as Council members, with the majority being non-Council members.
3. Once approved by the membership, The Discernment Team will receive direction from the Council on its leadership gaps and the specific gifting it may need for its future leadership work.
4. The Discernment Team will assess the leadership quality, character and relational suitability of all individuals it recommends for leadership.
5. The Discernment Team is responsible for identifying suitably qualified candidates to fill positions on the Council and present them at the Annual General Meeting for approval.
6. The Discernment Team may also be asked by a Ministry Team to find people gifted and suitable to serve in the ministries of the Church as needed.



7. The work of the Discernment team will incorporate the vision, strategies and policies of the church.
8. The Discernment Team will report annually to the membership on its activities.
9. A member of the discernment team may serve successive terms to a maximum of (six) 6 years.

### **3.8 Appointment of Council Members**

The discernment process for the appointment of Council members is as follows:

1. Based on Council's assessment of the future needs of the Church and the current mix of gifting, Council will present an assessment of the types of individuals it needs to the congregation and the Discernment Team.
2. With biblical and competency principles in mind, the Church Members will be given a minimum of thirty (30) days after the nomination forms are distributed to submit names to the Discernment Team.
3. The Discernment Team will prayerfully review all nominees and choose the appropriate candidates to present to Council, based on giftedness, leadership qualities, competency and the current needs of Council.
4. The Discernment Team will interview the selected candidates and invite them to attend a Council orientation to provide greater understanding of Council member obligations, as well as an overview of Council policies and procedures.
5. A nominated member may decline letting their name stand as a candidate.
6. The Discernment Team will prayerfully review and finalize the names of proposed Council members with Council, giving consideration ensuring that a diverse composition of church membership is evident on Council.
7. The names shall be placed before the Church membership for approval.
8. All new Council members will be commissioned with prayer and laying on of hands.
9. Should a vacancy on Council arise mid-term,
  - a. Council will inform the Discernment Team and provide them with an assessment of its needs.
  - b. The Discernment Team will provide Council with a candidate for appointment.
  - c. Council may then appoint such an individual to serve until the next Annual General

Meeting. In order to continue as a member of Council the individual must then proceed through the prescribed discernment process.

### 3.9 Council Member Qualifications

Council members must be Members of The Gathering Church. We recognize that we are all broken and in need of grace before God. Council members are the overseers of the Church. Council members will follow the teachings of Jesus, exhibit mature Christian behaviour and have gifts and aptitudes for leadership.

1. **Be Above Reproach** – they must lead by example and demonstrate a lifestyle free of patterns of sin.
2. **In Healthy Relationships** - evidence of healthy interpersonal and family relationships inside and outside the Church.
3. **Be Temperate** – self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.
4. **Be Wise** – sober, sensible, balanced in judgment, not given to quick, superficial decisions.
5. **Be Generous** – unselfish with their personal resources.
6. **Be A Good Communicator** – able to listen and communicate in a non-argumentative way.
7. **Not be a New Convert** – must have sufficient longevity as a Christian to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and depth of their spirituality.
8. **Be Reputable** – well respected as a person of integrity by all and free from hypocrisy.
9. **Be Humble** – servant hearted, not stubborn, prone to forcing opinions on others, or abusing authority.
10. **Be Devout** – dedicated Christ followers seeking to be conformed to His image. Committed to prayer, worship, the study of Scripture, and the guarding of their own walk.
11. **Be Peace Loving** - someone who pursues peace and reconciliation in their own lives, as well as in those around them.
12. **Be Gifted** - necessary competencies in the area of shepherding and leadership.
13. **Be Sufficiently Independent** – someone is free of real or perceived conflicts of

interest, that is, someone who is not employed by the Church, or has a significant business relationship with the Church, or have close family members who are employed by the Church or who have a significant business relationship with the Church.

### **3.10 Council Covenant**

The Council Covenant provides specific guidance for the spiritual leaders of the Church. Exemplary godly relationships, attitudes and behavior are essential for trust, credibility, productivity and good governance. It is vital, therefore, that each person who accepts the invitation to become a member of Council carefully considers and sincerely embraces this Covenant. Members of Council must personally commit themselves to:

1. Holding paramount the integrity, health, safety, and welfare of the Church in all actions;
2. Demonstrating the highest standards of personal integrity, honesty, and fortitude in all activities in order to inspire confidence and trust in Council leadership and the Church;
3. Working diligently to achieve the Church's mission and vision;
4. Upholding the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith;
5. Embodying respect, fairness, dignity, and love in the treatment of all persons, recognizing them as image bearers of God regardless of any differences such as race, economic status, religion, education, gender, occupation, age, sexual orientation, marital or family status, disability, age, or national origin;
6. Striving for personal excellence and participating in Council professional development activities;
7. Coming to meetings prepared, informed and in prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit for wisdom, and actively and respectfully participating in meetings;
8. Disclosing fully any conflict of interest and abstaining from Council deliberations pertaining to such conflicts of interest;
9. Conducting duties positively with open communication, collaboration, creativity, fortitude, dedication, and compassion;
10. Holding all Council information and discussions in complete confidence until a Council consensus to share the information has occurred;
11. Recognizing, appreciating and supporting that Council only speaks with a single voice;
12. Refraining from any attempt to exercise individual authority over the Church or pastors except as explicitly set forth in Council policies;

13. Respecting the moderators, or another designated spokesperson's role to speak on behalf of Council
14. Supporting Council decisions and be willing to resign if unable to do so;
15. Agreeing to resign as a Council member in the event of repeated violations of this Covenant, or serious misconduct (for example, sexual misconduct, criminal behaviour, promoting false teaching, fraudulent activity, addictive behaviour, undermining the authority of Council, inhibiting the effective operation of Council, acting divisively, etc.).