

Guidelines for Regulation of Members in Mennonite Brethren Churches

Scope & Purpose

This policy contains guidelines for the regulation of members in MB churches in Canada as referenced in CCMBC Bylaw Article 4 Section 7 Membership in the Member Church. The spirit of these guidelines is to promote best practices and consistency in the MB churches in Canada and not to place an undue burden on the church.

Related Resources

1. Confession of Faith Article 6, 8 & 10 and related Living our Confession guidelines
2. The Faith & Life pamphlet [Baptism and Church Membership](#)

Theological Basis

The basis for the guidelines contained in this policy are our convictions as stated in the Confession of Faith, specifically Articles 6, 8 & 10 which address the nature of the church, baptism, belonging, and discipleship in the context of a local church.

Among these are our beliefs that the church is the body of Christ, made visible in the context of the local church. The church forms a covenant community of persons who have placed their faith and trust in Christ and have made that faith visible in the act of believer's baptism.

We endorse a short span of time between faith and baptism which results in becoming a member of the covenant community. We hold that baptism makes one a member of the covenant community and that such belonging is not conditional on spiritual maturity.

Definitions

Covenant Community is a local church community consisting of baptized followers of Christ who mutually commit to follow Jesus in the context of this community. In this policy, the terms *covenant community* and *local church* are used interchangeably.

Member of the covenant community is a baptized believer committed to follow Jesus in this local church. This belonging begins at the point of a person's believer baptism in that congregation, acceptance into membership by means of transfer from another MB congregation, or acceptance into membership by means of testimony for those believer baptized elsewhere. This belonging ends when the person leaves the covenant community or is no longer a member in good standing. Missionaries, students, and others who, for a time, live away from the covenant community, but desire to retain their membership may be an exception, as discerned by the leadership of the local church.

Legally Constituted Membership refers to membership of an organization, as stipulated by applicable government regulations, for the purpose of participation in the governing decision-making in the organization. In many MB churches the covenant community members are also the legally constituted members. In some MB churches the legally constituted members are a subset of the covenant community members. (See [Article 8 Implementation Guideline 10](#))

Policy

To provide for consistency of practice that reflects our MB convictions, each local church shall:

1. Have in place clear processes for managing membership by:
 - a. Baptizing and incorporating believers in accordance with Article 8 of MB Confession of Faith and the Article Implementation Guidelines contained therein,
 - b. Having in place an adequate baptism preparation process (see [FAQ 5](#)),
 - c. Considering all believers baptized in this church to be members of the covenant community with mutual commitments as outlined in ([FAQ 10](#)),
 - d. Having in place the means and a process for incorporating into the covenant community those believers who were believer-baptized in other congregations,
 - e. Having in place policies which, in line with applicable government regulations, specify which covenant community members may vote on legal matters of church governance,
 - f. Having in place a means of tracking the individuals baptized in this church, those joined through transfer or testimony, and those who may legally participate in decision-making in the church.
2. Have in place a clearly defined process for church discipline that aims at restoration of the disciplined member into full participation in the covenant community.
3. Have in place a clear path, for all ages and stages of spiritual growth, for the purpose of nurturing and discipling toward spiritual maturity.
4. Have in place clearly defined practices for the process of calling out and nurturing the gifting and character of each member of the covenant community for service in the church, the MB conference, and the world.

Each MB church shall endeavour to implement the requirements of this policy as stated herein and do so in a way that honours the local context and strengthens the church.