

MEMBERSHIP POLICY

Introduction

1. Our goal is to become more intentional about nurturing our connection with those persons who are, who have been and may once again be important parts of our congregational life.
2. This has been adapted from the April 1998 document "The Shepherd's Staff" distributed by the Conference of Mennonites in Canada Resources Commission. This is described as "A church membership and ministry tracking instrument." Copies of their document are available.
3. Please note the three categories of "lists." The first, "Church Records," is another way of describing the records we already keep. The second category, "Lists of Current Members," is the section where we propose new ways of categorizing and responding to people. The third category, "Lists of Participants," are persons listed in our directory, bulletins and newsletters.
4. Most of the descriptions are taken verbatim from the Conference document. Some titles have been changed and we have added further descriptions of our mutual responsibilities. The comments about their status for conference statistics are based on the document; the comments about quorum etc. are our suggestion. The Associate Member category is not part of the Conference document, but feels appropriate for a setting such as ours.

CHURCH RECORDS

These are records kept in the church office.

1. Archival List

A list indicating all who are or ever have been a member of the congregation, regardless of the origin of that membership (baptism, transfer) or the result of that membership (transfer, non-resident, non-active, deceased or terminated). Names can be added to but never subtracted from this list.

Entrance & Exit:

Baptism or transfer or confession of faith

This list is kept permanently.

2. Membership Transfer or Former Member List

Those on the archival list whose membership has been formally transferred away from the congregation.

Entrance & Exit:

The member requests transfer to another congregation.

This list is kept permanently.

3. Death of Member List

Those on the archival list who are known to have died.

Entrance & Exit:

When the church learns of a death, this is recorded and kept as a permanent record.

4. Cessation List

Those on the archival list whose membership has been ended, be that as a result of a personal or congregational decision. This list would include persons joining churches which do not accept letters of transfer or persons who indicate their wish not to maintain contact with FMC.

Entrance & Exit:

A letter of withdrawal or a congregational decision. This is kept as a permanent record.

LISTS OF CURRENT MEMBERS

These persons are listed on church records, but are also persons with whom we have or wish to have continuing contact.

5. Active Member List

Those on the archival list who are present and actively committed to the life of the congregation. People demonstrate their commitment by such involvements as attendance at worship, Sunday School, participation in Women's, Care or Bible Study groups, financial support etc.

The church seeks to provide meaningful opportunities for worship, education, nurture, support and service and welcomes constructive suggestions and questions.

The Deacons are responsible to ensure a response when there are signs that a member's commitment is becoming less evident.

Entrance & Exit:

The constitution allows for joining by baptism, transfer or confession of faith. Active Members may leave by transferring their membership to another church. If members become inactive or temporarily at a distance, and this is verified by the Deacons, they may be placed on the Members at a Distance or Members in Transition list.

6. Members at a Distance

Those on the archival list who are temporarily away from the congregation and are not able to participate in congregational life for this reason. Though active in a congregation in their new location during their time of absence, they indicate their desire to remain in covenanted relationship with their home congregation.

The mutual responsibilities of such members and the congregation is to maintain meaningful contact through such means as bulletins and newsletters and by connecting when they return home for visits or when FMCers travel to their area.

Such members are counted as part of the conference statistics but not of the voting quorum.

Entrance & Exit:

The preferred route is that a member notify his/her Deacon of this move in order to work out ways to remain in contact during their absence. This Member may return to Active Membership when they return to Calgary, seek a membership transfer if this temporary residence becomes permanent, or be considered as Members in Transition where this category seems more descriptive.

7. Members in Transition

Those on the archival list who for geographic or other factors are not presently attending or active in the life of the home congregation, persons who have not covenanted with any other congregation, but who wish to maintain some arms-length connection with their congregation. This includes members in the process of changing churches.

This list includes persons who no longer demonstrate their commitment by those activities noted for "Active Members".

The mutual task of the church and the member in transition is to define a form of connection meaningful at this stage of their faith journey. The Deacon will ensure that contact is initiated for the purpose of seeking this.

Such members are not considered part of the voting quorum, nor of the conference membership statistics. We welcome such persons returning to active participation at any time.

Entrance & Exit:

When the Deacons become aware that a member's involvement is waning, they are to contact the Member, seeking to discern that member's needs and intentions. If the member wishes to stay uninvolved, the Deacon and member will seek to define the appropriate form of connection. If no connection is desired, then the member may be deemed to be choosing to withdraw from membership, whether by letter or by congregational action.

8. Associate Members

This is the corollary of our "members at a distance." These are members of other Christian churches, temporarily here in Calgary and worshipping with us, but wishing to maintain their covenant relationship with their home congregation.

Upon recommendation by the Deacons, such persons may be welcomed as Associate Members during a regular worship service.

After entering into such a commitment with us, such Associate Members have all the privileges and responsibilities of active members during their time here. They are counted as part of the quorum for voting, but not as part of the conference membership statistics.

Entrance & Exit:

The Associate Member may be accepted after recommendation by the Deacons. When the Associate leaves Calgary or First Mennonite Church, this membership is automatically terminated. If the Associate Member relocates here permanently, this Member may be welcomed into Active Membership upon recommendation by the Deacons.

LISTS OF PARTICIPANTS

While these persons are not listed on our formal membership records, they are listed in such places as our directory and are important parts of our congregational life.

9. Participants

Those active adherents not on the archival list but who are active participants in the life of the congregation. This list indicates the important role of non-baptized children and youth (including those studying or working elsewhere) as essential parts of the congregational community.

We welcome their participation and their gifts. The mutual task of the church and the participant is to define a form of connection meaningful at this stage of their faith journey.

The Deacon is responsible for ensuring that this happens. We encourage such persons to grow in their faith and to consider baptism and church membership, or membership transfer.