

What are the expectations of members?

Commitment to membership is demonstrated through a depth of seriousness and effort with respect to the life and ministry of the community. Members make their lives together a priority through active participation in the worship, ministry, fellowship and mission of the church. Members are encouraged to share their personal, financial, and relational resources along with their spiritual gifts as ongoing expressions of their love for God and commitment to their fellowship in His Church.

While there are normal community expectations surrounding participation in key activities, services, meetings and events that are part of the ongoing life of the church, members are encouraged to participate, but not coerced. The community respects the role of personal discernment and the exercise of responsible choice in these matters. A true sense of commitment, not a list of expectations governs our life together.

Does Good Shepherd have a set of beliefs that provide a rule of faith for members of the community?

Good Shepherd's official statement of faith is the United Church of Canada's statement of faith adopted in 1925. It can be viewed on the website or picked up in the foyer of the church. While seemingly dated, this statement is orthodox, biblical and Christ-centered. In recent years, the most common expression of our community's faith has been the Apostle's Creed, which we profess together on many Sundays during corporate worship. These two traditional sources draw upon the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which are the primary sources for our rule of faith (belief) and practice (moral and spiritual).

Are members of Good Shepherd expected to believe in exactly the same way?

While there is a standard of faith that comes through the community's sources of faith (mentioned above) there is latitude in how that faith is practiced. We recognize and celebrate the fact that there are various perspectives and some differences of conviction, which

exist within the historic Christian faith. The celebrated saying of Thomas à Kempis captures the essence of the approach to diversity within the body of Christ that is practiced at Good Shepherd:

In all things essential, unity;
In doubtful, liberty;
In all things, charity.

How does one become a member?

For those who have been previously baptized and made a confession of faith, the membership process will usually take the following form:

- 1. Investigation.** Through participation in a membership seminar, potential members will have the opportunity to: explore what it means to become a member of Good Shepherd Community Church; to become further acquainted with the story and traditions of Good Shepherd; and to examine the responsibilities and expectations of members.
- 2. Application.** Those interested in becoming members can fill out the application form stating their desire.
- 3. Affirmation.** Potential members will have the opportunity to affirm their desire for membership and receive affirmation from representatives of the board of elders.
- 4. Confirmation/Celebration.** In the context of a formal worship service candidates will be asked to profess their faith in Jesus Christ and to express their commitment to His body as found at Good Shepherd Community Church. This also provides the congregation with the opportunity to pledge their support and celebrate the addition of the newest members.

The membership process may take a slightly different and more elongated form for new believers and those who have not yet received baptism.

Membership *at* Good Shepherd

An Introduction
and Overview
of Our Community



Encountering Christ and Thoughtfully Following Him

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Who are we?

Good Shepherd is a multi-ethnic, multi-generational, multi-tradition worshipping community, rooted in the goodness of God and called to nurture people to maturity in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. We as the church body are committed to the orthodox Christian belief that we are to be messengers holding forth God's offer of love and pardon and that it is our call to be God's instruments living out this message in lives of loving sacrifice to our neighbours. We are to be channels through whom God's gracious Spirit flows in blessing to the community and to the world.

Mission Statement

Good Shepherd Community Church exists to invite ordinary people to encounter Christ and thoughtfully follow Him in the world.

What are Good Shepherd's roots?

Good Shepherd Community Church came into existence in 1980 when a group of people set out from West Ellesmere United Church in Scarborough in response to a calling to establish a new church in the northern part of Scarborough in order to reach the community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What are the church's values?

- **Scriptural Authority**
- **Holy Spirit Gift-based Ministry**
- **Excellence**
- **Prayer**
- **Holistic Transformation**
- **Engaging Culture**
- **Reflection**
- **Diversity**

What are some of the church's unique qualities/practices and perspectives?

- respect for both historic practices of baptism
- affirmation of both women and men in leadership and ministry
- blending of various streams of spiritual traditions
- practice of communion as significant expression of worship
- charismatic sensitivity

What are the traditions practiced in the life and worship of the church?

At its core, Good Shepherd strives to be biblically rooted, Christ-centered, and Spirit-filled. Various streams of spirituality in the Christian faith are respected, drawn upon and practiced in our life of worship, prayer, devotion and ministry. These include the contemplative (prayer-filled life), holiness (virtuous life), charismatic (Spirit-empowered life), social justice (the compassionate life), evangelical (Word-centered life), and incarnational (sacramental life) traditions.

How is leadership exercised and how are decisions made?

Our constitution describes the authority structures and processes of the church as well as the various responsibilities of elders, pastors and the congregation. Elders, pastors and the congregation all have roles in making decisions. Elders and pastors are responsible for the spiritual leadership of the community. Members of the church are encouraged to vote in all congregational decisions.

Where does the idea of membership come from?

Membership as an idea is rooted in the Apostle Paul's notion that Christians are incorporated by virtue of their baptism and profession of faith into the body of Christ, which is the Church (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 4:1-13). Each Christian is therefore considered to be a part (or member) of the spiritual body whose head is Jesus Christ. In light of this, each person belonging to and involved in a local Christian church is already a member by virtue of their faith in

Jesus. Christians in a local church who take the formal step of becoming a member of that community were actually already members in a spiritual sense.

Why have formal acts of becoming a member?

The entire Christian life is one that is lived out of the prior spiritual reality of what Christ has accomplished for us. In Christ there is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) and as Christians we are called to live ever more fully into this new reality. The spiritual reality of our membership in the body of Christ continually calls out for more complete and expressive embodiment in our lives, which takes the form of formal church membership and responsible involvement in the life of the local church.

What are the basic requirements for becoming a member?

Membership is not something that is just for the "spiritual elite" or those who have "made it" as Christians. Rather, membership is for everyone who considers Good Shepherd to be their church home and regular worshipping community. The basic requirements of membership are baptism, public profession of faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ and commitment to the body of Christ as it occurs in and through the people, ministry and mission of Good Shepherd.

What are the key benefits of becoming a member?

The Church community provides its members with a sense of belonging in the context of spiritual friendship. Being a member means you receive the benefit of the community's love, support and care. Belonging to the church means that you believe that these people are your people, a household of faith given to you as a gift from God for your spiritual strengthening and well-being.