

ASSOCIATE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

POLICY (July 2013)

**1 PARTICIPANTS**

Churches may apply to the Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (OCMBC) to become full members within this Conference of Churches. Usually this will involve a season of ‘courting’, the process of Associate Church Membership.

Church Plants Church plants will be accepted as OCMBC member churches upon the affirmation of the Faith and Life Team (FLT) in consultation with the C2C Regional Leadership Team. Having met the criteria for membership the Board of Directors will recommend their full membership for ratification at the next OCMBC Annual General Meeting (AGM). In certain situations church plants may be directed into the Associate Membership process before becoming full member churches.

Church Adoptions Churches from other denominations or independent ministries may request membership within the OCMBC and will begin this process by entering the associate membership process.

Churches birthed out of a church crisis may request membership within the OCMBC but are required to become associate members of the OCMBC before becoming full members.

**2 TIME FRAME**

Associate membership is not intended to be a long-term process. Usually this will take one year although it may spread over 18 months. The transition to full membership is undertaken cooperatively between the applicant church and the FLT. If after 18 months no formal decision has been reached the applicant church will be withdrawn from its associate membership status.

**3 JURISDICTION**

Associate membership of OCMBC falls under the jurisdiction of the FLT under the authority of the Board of Directors. Any actions relative to granting or removing associate membership will be undertaken solely at the FLT's discretion. Associate membership does not require OCMBC membership ratification, and thus may be initiated or dissolved at any time.

The C2C Regional Leadership Team may choose to act as facilitator for certain local churches towards associate membership and will make such recommendations to the FLT.

Final decision for a church entering full membership into the OCMBC will be made by the Board of Directors at the request of the Executive Director and FLT. At the next AGM this new member church will be introduced to the Convention for formal ratification.

**4 PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS**

Churches who become associate members of the Conference are invited to attend and participate in all OCMBC events and activities. Full access to seminars, workshops, network activities, pastoral retreats, camping programs and other activities are available to associate member churches.

Associate member churches will be able to send observers to the AGM and other official meetings of the Conference, but are granted official voting status only after the church has attained full OCMBC Membership.

**5 EXPECTATIONS**

Associate member churches are requested to:

* uphold the spirit of the MB Confession of Faith
* submit to the governance of the Conference which is led by the Board of Directors, the Executive Director and the FLT or C2C Regional Leadership Team.
* attend and participate in key Conference events, including the AGM and pastoral retreats

Prior to Full Membership it will be expected that:

* There has been careful review the MB Confession of Faith and that the leaders agree to support and teach its theological convictions
* Pastoral staff (half time or greater) be credentialed and attend a Pastors Credentialing Orientation (see www.onmb.org for details)
* There is a willingness to abide by the General Operating By-laws of the OCMBC and it’s Board of Directors
* Establish a percentage giving budget to the work and mission of the OCMBC (currently recommending 4% of church budget to go towards OCMBC, 4% to CCMBC and 2% to MB Mission)
* The financials of the church have been reviewed and they are in good standing with the federal government and registered charities commission
* The church has liability insurance in place

**6 BENEFITS**

Paid pastoral staff may access the benefit program of the CCMBC, including medical, dental, Life Insurance, LTD and Pension. CCMBC also offers free payroll services for paid pastoral staff.

**7 CONTRACTS**

An associate member church may choose to develop a ministry agreement or contract for purposes of adjusting, or adding distinctive elements to, this standard agreement. In such cases, the ministry agreement or contract needs to be approved by FLT, and C2C where necessary.

If the associate member church receives financial support from the OCMBC a contract is required to clearly outline the expectations terms and conditions of such funding.

**8 ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP DISSOLUTION**

During the term of the associate membership a church may withdraw from membership so as long as they do not violate any contractual agreements.

FLT, acting on behalf of the Board of Directors, may choose to dissolve a church's associate membership as long as the OCMBC does not violate any contractual agreements.

If associate membership is dissolved with the church in good standing, then the credentials of the pastoral staff may be maintained until they are transitioned to another credentialing body, for a period of no more than six months.

If the church is not in good standing at the time of associate membership dissolution (eg. through pastoral moral failure, theological insubordination or financial insubordination) then pastoral credentials will be removed immediately by the FLT.