

# 本立比頌恩堂

## Burnaby Pacific Grace Church

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### Membership Transferal Application

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

We will hold the Christmas Baptism and Membership Transferal Ceremony on Sunday Dec 24, 2023. If you have been baptized, have attended our church in the past 3 months, and participated in our church's various activities regularly, such as Sunday worship, fellowship, and Sunday school, we sincerely welcome you to join our membership to become one of our church members. Applicant is required to attend the "Membership Class", of which the time and date will be announced later.

You will also need to prepare a) a personal testimony and b) a reference letter from your former church. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the pastoral staff.

Yours in Christ  
Burnaby Pacific Grace Church

# Who Are the Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren?

## *A. Mennonite Roots are Traced back into Anabaptism.*

**1. Conrad Grabel, a well educated scholar converted under the ministry of Ulrich Zwingli in 1525 became an enthusiastic evangelical.**

\*Within 2 years, conflict developed between Zwingli and "radicals" like Grabel and Felix Mantz who wanted a complete break with all church practices that were different from the teachings of the NT.

\*The key areas of disagreement were:

- {a}. Separation of church and state.
- {b}. Elimination of the mass.
- {c}. Wished to celebrate the Lord's Supper in homes.
- {d}. Wanted to practice believer's baptism upon confession of faith.

**2. Zwingli failed to persuade the "radicals" to follow his teachings on some of these key areas. This led to a Zurich City Council decision "against the free believers church, decreeing that all children must be baptized within 8 days of birth and that non-compliers would be banished from the church.**

When Grabel, Mantz & others refused to comply, they were banished from the church. They met in Mantz's house where Grabel baptized George Blauroch, a former priest, who then baptized the others.

The newly baptized then pledged themselves as true disciples of Christ, to live lives separate from the world and its evil works, to spread the Gospel and keep the faith.

Since they rejected infant baptism and practiced believers baptism upon the personal confession of their faith in Jesus Christ, they were labeled as ANABAPTISTS.

**3. During the next months, many Anabaptist leaders were arrested and persecuted, but the movement continued to grow.**

>In March 1526 the authorities decreed death by drowning for anyone who practiced re-baptising.

>On January 7, 1527, Felix Mantz was drowned in Zurich, and became the 1st Anabaptist martyr.

>Persecution resulted in Anabaptism spreading to Germany & Holland and also other countries in Europe.

>Anabaptism required a deep commitment to take Jesus seriously in everyday life. The key element was experiencing the new birth through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**4. Menno Simons, a converted Catholic Priest became one of the Anabaptist leaders. He was respected for his Biblical teachings about faith and life.**

\*Those who followed his teachings about the Bible and lifestyle would become known as the Mennonites.

\*Over the years Mennonite groups have emerged in countries like Holland and Germany and have also scattered to different countries in search of a new and better life as well as religious & political freedoms.

### *B. The Origin of the Mennonite Brethren.*

**1. Many Mennonites moved to Southern Russia in the late 17 hundreds to take up farming.**

\*Here, they received favorable status with the government as well as extensive privileges like the right to control their religion, civic and educational systems and an exemption from military service.

\*However their spiritual vitality was lost when prosperity and materialism became more important than faith in Christ.

**2. The Mennonite Brethren church came into being as a result of a revival in Southern Russia on January 6, 1880.**

{a}. After a period of Bible Study and prayer a group of 18 family heads formed a church dedicated to the principles of NT faith.

{b}. The most notable areas of revival were evidenced in:

\*\*Deep concern about the spiritual welfare of each other...

\*\*Taught that Christians could have assurance of their faith...

\*\*Practiced baptism by immersion as a prerequisite for membership...

\*\*Evangelistic meetings were common...

\*\*Practiced a congregational form of church government {brotherhood}.

\*\*The Mennonite Brethren church stands faithful allegiance to Christ.

{c}. The MB church has grown since then to a denomination of about 50,000 members in North America. In Canada about 30,000 and in the United States about 20,000 as well as many more world wide through MB Missions/Services. {In India nearly 70,000 & about 72,000 in Congo {formerly Zaire}.

{d}. Nearly half of all Mennonite Brethren in Canada live in B.C. (nearly <sup>17,000</sup>~~15,000~~) scattered in <sup>101</sup>~~62~~ churches across the province.

# ABRIDGED STATEMENT OF FAITH

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In essential beliefs we have unity.

*"There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one home, when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."* Ephesians 4:4-6

In non-essential beliefs we have liberty.

*"Accept him whose faith is weak without passing judgement on disputable matters. Who are you to judge someone else's servant. To his own master he stands or falls. So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. So whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourselves and God."*  
Romans 14:1, 4, 12, 22

In all our beliefs we show love.

*"If I hold in my mind, not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God and have the faith that can move mountains but have no love, I amount to nothing at all."* 1 Corinthians 13:2 (Phillips)

- We believe in God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe that God revealed Himself in creation, through the Old and New Testaments, and supremely through Jesus Christ, His Son. The inspired Word of God, the Bible, is our guide for faith and Christian living.
- We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, is truly God and truly man.
- We believe that man was created in the image of God. By sinning he broke fellowship with God, incurring physical and spiritual death upon himself and the entire human race. But Christ died for our sin, rose for our justification, and now lives to intercede for believers.
- We believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who convicts of sin, regenerates the believer and guides and empowers for victorious living and dedicated service.
- We believe that all who put their trust in Christ receive the forgiveness of sin and are born again by the Holy Spirit as children of God.
- We believe that the Christian, through the power of the Holy spirit, follows the Lord, giving evidence of the fruit of the spirit and practises love in all situations and relationships.
- We believe that the church is the body of Christ, consisting of all true believers whose supreme task is to make disciples through teaching, preaching and ministries of compassion. Believers minister to others through gifts endowed by the Spirit of God and help one another in the Christian life.
- We believe that Christians should be baptized in obedience to Christ's command, and as a covenant expression of union with Christ in His death and resurrection.
- We believe that the Lord's Supper expresses the communion of believers with one another and with Christ.
- We believe that God instituted marriage for the fulfilment of both partners, who should share a common Christian commitment.
- We believe that God intended man to work diligently. He also set aside one day for rest and worship.
- We believe that Christians should always speak the truth and avoid oaths ("I affirm" rather than "I swear").
- We believe that because God instituted the state to maintain civil order, Christians should obey all laws not contrary to Scripture and pray for and witness to the authorities.
- We believe that Christians should avoid war and violence, and practice Christ's law of love in all situations.
- We believe that Christ is coming again and will judge all men, punishing the unjust with eternal torment and rewarding the just with eternal joy in heaven. Christ will establish a new heaven and a new earth where God will be all in all.

- For a more complete doctrinal statement see Confession of Faith of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America.
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# Constitutional By-laws of Burnaby Pacific Grace Church

- 1 The English name of our church is Burnaby Pacific Grace Church, 本立比頌恩堂 in Chinese.
- 2 Our church is affiliated to the BC Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.
- 3 Doctrine: Our church accepts in totality the confession of faith of the Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.
- 4 Church Memberships: Membership is granted to those baptized in this church or accepted through membership transfer. Procedures stated below:
  - 4.1 Application for baptism: Applicants must be 12 years of age or above, enlightened by the Holy Spirit to repent of their sins and to confess the Lord Jesus as Saviour, accepting the faith of our church, attending its services regularly, and having completed the baptismal class. Upon recommendation by the lead pastor and after gaining approval from the board of deacons through a testimony and an interview session on faith, the applicant may be accepted as member.
  - 4.2 Application for membership transfer: Believers of other evangelical Christian churches transferring due to reasons of moving or special circumstances necessary to leave their former churches and who have subsequently attended this church regularly for at least three months, ready to accept the stated confession of faith and abide by the constitutional by-laws of this church, shall, through the recommendations of the lead pastor and the approval of the board of deacons, be accepted as members.
- 5 Duties of Members
  - 5.1 To regularly study the Bible, pray, follow God's teachings, and attend Sunday services and other meetings.
  - 5.2 To seek to glorify God in their daily living and conducts.
  - 5.3 To witness for the Lord diligently and lead others to Christ.
  - 5.4 To understand the truth of stewardship, giving material offering, gifts, and time to God, sharing in responsibilities of the church and serving the Lord in one accord.
- 6 Review of Membership
  - 6.1 Officers or members of this church who have acted or taught contrary to the teachings of God's word, bringing disgrace to His Holy name or the reputation of this church, and refuse to repent even after counseling, may, upon the approval of the board of deacons, be disciplined according to the severity of the issues in the following ways:
    - 6.1.1 Termination of their duties
    - 6.1.2 Termination of their participation in the Holy Communion
    - 6.1.3 Termination of their membership.
  - 6.2 Those whose participation in the Holy Communion or whose membership have been terminated may have their privileges reconsidered for restoration by the board of deacons if they truly repent and have demonstrated an obvious change of behaviour.
  - 6.3 Members who are over 18 years of age shall have the privilege to vote.
  - 6.4 Members who are over 21 years of age shall have the privilege to be elected.
  - 6.5 Members who have not attended Sunday worship service for over six months without sufficient reason shall have their privilege to vote and privilege to be elected reviewed by the board of deacons.

## 7 Organization and Election:

- 7.1 Membership meeting should consist of all registered members of the church. The meeting is called once a year by the chair of the board of deacons in the beginning of each year, to approve the financial statement and ministry report of the previous year, and the annual budget of the current year. In case of special circumstances, the board of deacons may call for a special membership meeting. Every membership meeting must serve a two-week advance notice with the agenda announced. All motions at the membership meeting must be passed by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present in the meeting.
- 7.2 The board of deacons
- 7.2.1 The members of the board of deacons shall consist of the lead pastor, pastoral staffs, and deacons elected by the members. A minimum of eight meetings shall be held each year. In case of special circumstances, the chair of the board of deacons may call for a deacon meeting. Part time pastoral staffs (with working hours no less than 20 hours per week) shall also have the right to vote.
- 7.2.2 The organization of the board of deacons shall consist of:
- 7.2.2.1 A chair, a vice-chair, a secretary, a treasurer, and an accountant. Except for the lead pastor who is the chair, all other posts are filled through agreement among the elected deacons. A steering committee, whose members are appointed by the current board, shall be formed to deal with urgent matters.
- 7.3 Number and terms of deacons
- 7.3.1 The board of deacons shall consist of at least 5 elected deacons. The number may be increased according to the needs of the church. The term for each deacon is two years. A deacon may not serve for more than two consecutive terms, after which he/she must retire for one year. The preferred number of newly elected deacons is no greater than half of the total number of deacons in the board. The current board shall determine the number of deacons. In case of special need, the board may invite deacons who have completed their terms to extend their service for one more year. If a deacon due to valid reasons needs to resign from the board, after the deacon board accepts his/her resignation letter, the vacancy is filled by the candidate with the next highest vote.
- 7.4 Ministry departments:
- 7.4.1 Ministry departments are to be formed under the jurisdiction of the board of deacons. They shall plan and coordinate various ministries in accordance to the development directions and goals of the church. These departments include: (1) Caring department, (2) Worship department, (3) Music department, (4) Literature department, (5) Evangelism department, (6) Children department, (7) Chinese Adult Sunday School department, (8) English department, (9) Library department, (10) House Affairs department, (11) Fellowship department, and (12) Audio-Visual department. The number of departments may be adjusted according to the needs of the church. The department heads shall be appointed by the board of deacons in accordance to their gifts. Each department head shall serve a term of two years and may not serve in the same position for over two consecutive terms. The committee members under the department heads shall be appointed by the department heads with the approval of the lead pastor.
- 7.5 Deacon Nomination Committee:
- 7.5.1 The deacon nomination committee shall consist of 5 members: the lead pastor as the official chair, two members from the current board of deacons, and two members

nominated in writing to the lead pastor from the general congregation. The deacon nomination committee is responsible for nominating prospective candidates for next year's board of deacons, in accordance to the deacon nomination guidelines set forth in the Bible.

- 7.6 Within a week after the list of nominees is announced by the deacon nomination committee, members of the church may submit other written nominations, each signed by two members, to the deacon nomination committee in accordance to the deacon nomination guidelines. Nomination by members must be first accepted by the deacon nomination committee before the new nominee is included in the list.
- 7.7 Guidelines for deacon nominees:
  - 7.7.1 Born again Christian, baptized for at least two years (1Timothy 3:6), a member of this church (Acts 4:23), and familiar with this church.
  - 7.7.2 Monogamous, irreproachable in marital relationship and relationships with the opposite sex (1Timothy 3:2).
  - 7.7.3 Of good reputation (1Timothy 3:7; Acts 6:3).
    - 7.7.3.1 Not indulgent in bad habits or committing immoral or illegal acts
    - 7.7.3.2 Living out a good personal and family life (1Timothy 3:2).
  - 7.7.4 Fulfilling one's responsibility in tithes and offerings, thus capable of being an example to others (Matthew 6:21; 1Corinthians 6:2).
  - 7.7.5 Spiritually mature, willing to cooperate with others in serving the Lord (1Corinthians 12:24).
  - 7.7.6 Has presided in other duties like department head, Sunday school teacher, or other evangelistic works, and is recognized as a faithful and responsible worker (2Corinthians 8:22; 1Timothy 3:10).
- 8 Ordinances:
  - 8.1 Baptism: Baptism is a testimony made by Christians before God and human. It is to be followed by all believers, symbolizing the truth of being dead, buried, and resurrected with Christ. Baptism by immersion is practiced in this church except in case of serious illness when baptism by sprinkling is conducted.
  - 8.2 Holy Communion: Holy Communion is to commemorate Christ according to His command, conducted once a month for all born again, baptized Christians.
- 9 Wedding and Funeral Services: Members of this church may request pastors of this church to officiate wedding ceremonies or funeral services in accordance to the following stated guidelines:
  - 9.1 The marriage partner must be a Christian and the union must be legal.
  - 9.2 Members who invite a pastor of this church to officiate funerals must not allow other family members to construct altars or conduct ceremonies that resemble to idol worship, chanting, occult practices, and rituals of other religions after the pastor has officiated a funeral service.
- 10 The board of deacons shall be the highest authority in the interpretation of these by-laws.
- 11 These by-laws may be amended as need arises by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present in the membership meeting.
- 12 Any other by-laws not stated in regards to administration, organization, authorities, and other aspects concerning the church should be referred to the constitution of the BC Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

