



WELCOME TO

FOREST BROOK

A MEMBERSHIP GUIDE

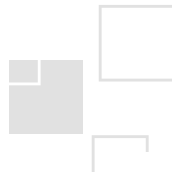
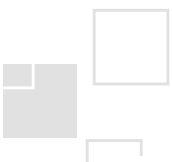


We're an ordinary group of Jesus-followers, representing a variety of backgrounds, who are learning and growing in our faith together. We consider ourselves a spiritual family and value relationships over brand and structure.

When we gather, we bring our 'whole selves', acknowledging that authenticity is far more important to God than perfection. We strive to create an environment that is safe, accessible, inclusive and centered on the hospitality of Jesus.

The table remains an important picture for us. Both as a representation of our roots in the Brethren tradition (we share communion almost every time we gather), and as a vision for our future (a bigger table, where there's always room for more.) We love the way this visual points to spiritual hunger, God's provision, and shared experience - a place for everyone to belong.

No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you're welcome here.





OUR VISION

Centered on Jesus, living in God's love, joining His mission to restore the world.

OUR MISSION

“Love God and love others.”

Reflecting God's love, following Jesus and bringing hope to our neighbours - where we live, work, go to school and play.

Gather: Worship & Community

We gather, centered around Jesus, as a worshipful and relational community to connect with God and one another.

Form: Growing in Faith Together

We are formed by relationships and shared practices that shape who we are and how we live. Formation is about becoming the people God calls us to be.

Send: Living God's Mission

We are sent to join God's work in the world, sharing His love and hope. We see our neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools as places where God is already active, and we are called to join Him there.



WHAT WE VALUE

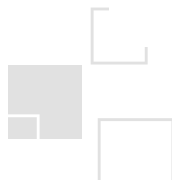


1. *Whole Life Spirituality*

Following Jesus permeates every aspect of our lives. Our faith is embodied as we engage in the practices of prayer, reading Scripture, worship and communion in their widest definitions, both gathered as a church and in our everyday lives.

2. *Shared Leadership*

We model and practice shared leadership at every level, recognizing that Forest Brook is God's church, and that it's the Spirit who empowers us to lead, guide, and collaborate. We fix our eyes on the same horizon, and at the same time, cultivate imagination and release creativity toward our common goal.



A COMMUNITY ***GATHERED***

3. Belonging

We foster a culture of welcome and inclusion, where our diversity is represented, and each one finds safe space to gather and belong.

4. Covenant Community

Choosing relationships over structures and systems, we care about one another deeply and act with vulnerability and authenticity.

5. Story

We share the Good News (Jesus Story), our own stories (including all their authentic parts) and how they intersect. We celebrate the continuation of the Jesus story in our world today through worship, prayer, communion and word.

A COMMUNITY *FORMED*

6. Becoming

Our practices form us. We identify the work of transformation as on-going and see ourselves as 'works in progress, continually becoming more who we were made to be. We embrace experimentation and adaptation in our practices as we journey in following Jesus.

7. Listening

We are Spirit-led and Spirit-powered, choosing to listen, learn and discern in community. We hold plans loosely, pause to course-correct and relinquish our personal agendas in favour of the collective, acknowledging God's way is better.

A COMMUNITY *SENT*

8. *Good-Neighbouring*

Through a lens of openness and curiosity, we partner with and contribute to initiatives that work toward the overall flourishing of our community. We love freely, share hope and offer peace to our neighbours.

9. *Radical Hospitality*

We practice 'witness', embrace God's heart for justice, and move towards allyship. We seek to identify the people and places that are at the center of God's heart, but otherwise overlooked or excluded, and extend welcome and mercy.

10. *Agility*

We 'read the winds', attentive to where God is at work in the world around us, and responding as He invites. We create and protect space in our resources and calendar so that we are available and agile - ready to join in.



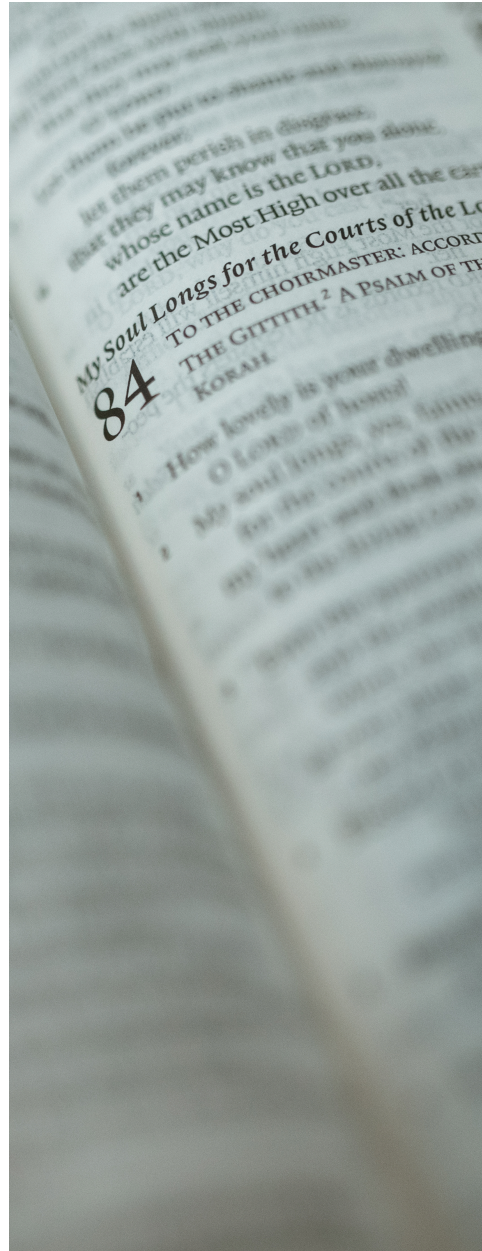
WHAT WE BELIEVE

At Forest Brook, we come to our faith from various traditions, backgrounds and theological perspectives. Of course, this has the potential to create conflict and division where we diverge on doctrinal issues. Jesus' own prayer was that His followers "be one" (John 17:20-21) so we highly value unity among our spiritual family. We hold to the tenets of the Christian faith as outlined in the historical creeds (see more below.) On all other secondary matters we choose to follow the admonition of Romans 14 - allowing each to believe and conduct themselves according to their convictions, and withholding judgment on one another as we differ in opinion.

St. Augustine put it this way, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."



So what happens when we disagree? Our leadership is guided by **three principles: precepts, preferences and practices**. If a matter is determined to be a **precept** (something we are given clear direction on in the Scriptures) then we hold to that together. If something is determined to be a **preference**, then the Romans 14 injunction applies. If something is determined to be a **practice** - something that we have to "do" together, then leadership discerns and decides together.





AT FOREST BROOK ***WE BELIEVE...***

- In One God, who is the creator and ruler of the entire universe. We believe God exists as a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe God is holy, loving, perfect and all-powerful. And we believe that although God is all of this – He loves you and me and wants to be known personally by each one of us.
- We believe that God makes Himself known to us in general through the creation, and in particular through the Bible.



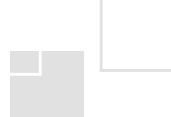
- In Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We believe that Jesus exists eternally as the second member of the Godhead, and that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, lived a perfectly sinless life and gave himself as a sacrifice for the sins of all humanity by dying on the cross. We believe that after three days he rose from the dead, demonstrating his power over sin and death, and that he then ascended into heaven where he is now positioned in a place of ultimate authority at the Father's side. We believe that Jesus is the only one who can bridge the divide between sinful people like us and a holy God who is without sin at all. We believe that he will return someday to consummate the Kingdom of God on earth, which He rules as our rightful Judge and King.
- In the Holy Spirit, who is God In Us. He is the agent through whom God created the world and brings salvation to humanity. He comes to us from the Father and the Son, and through Him we become aware of our need for God and forgiveness. When a person becomes "born again" he enters that person and places that person into the Church (which is the Body of Christ). He brings us security, help, comfort and guidance. He gives us gifts which enable us serve in the Kingdom and to produce good fruit in our lives. Though we are able to resist him, it is God's desire that each of us be filled and led by Him.

- In the Bible, as God's particular revelation to us. We believe that the Holy Spirit used human agents throughout time to record and to preserve the integrity of the 66 books which we call the Holy Bible. We believe that these books are therefore inspired by God in a manner unique to all other human literature – that they are in essence the Word of God. The main purpose of the Bible is to reveal who God is to us, and what His purpose is for human history. We believe that the Bible is complete, trustworthy and without error in all that it affirms. We believe that God still speaks to us through these books today, and that it is the final authority of matters concerning what we believe and how we are to live.
- In the salvation of humanity. We believe that God made human beings in His image and that it is our purpose to know and worship Him, to love Him and to reflect His character in the world. We believe that humanity has fallen from this original intention by following our own selfish desires and disobeying God's will for us. As a result, humanity is separated from God and rests under the condemnation of sin. We believe that the good news of God is that He has not been content to leave humanity in its fallen state, but has instead set in motion a plan of redemption in the person and work of Jesus Christ....

- *...(continued) We believe that through Jesus we are set free from the control of sin and that we become able to live a life of grace and truth, in restored relationships with both God and our fellow human beings. We believe that every person who has ever lived will, after their death, be judged by God for how they lived their life.*
- *In the church, which is the living organism of the Body of Christ in the world today. The church is made up of all of those who have been called out of their life of sin and who now live in community with one another as the people of God. We believe that God adds those He chooses to the church via their individual salvation. We believe that there is only one church in the world and that it is made up of all of those, irrespective of their individual denomination, who have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Head of this one church, the Great Shepherd of God's people. We believe that this universal church has been commissioned by Jesus to proclaim the presence of the Kingdom of God in this world and to baptise and teach all of those who are called to enter that Kingdom, until the end of the age. We believe that the church was given two sacraments, baptism and communion, through which it visibly demonstrates the grace of God on earth.*

AT FOREST BROOK WE BELIEVE...(CONTINUED)

- We believe that the local church assembly is essentially a microcosm of this great universal church.
- In the Kingdom of God, which is the dominion, or rule, of God, which was lost on this earth by humanity's fall into sin. We believe that God's redemptive purpose is to ultimately restore His Kingdom on earth, to every living creature He has made. We believe that this restored Kingdom was inaugurated on earth in the person and saving work of Jesus, and that since His death it has since been growing to include people from every generation and ethnicity. We believe that a person must be "born again" to become part of this Kingdom, and that it is practically imperceptible to those who are not yet in the Spirit. A person enters this Kingdom by faith in Jesus Christ, and that this is something to be sought above all things. We believe that this Kingdom will one day be fully realized on earth



OUR HISTORY & FUTURE

We treasure our beginnings and at the same time, are committed to looking toward the future with fresh eyes. Like the Indigenous parable of a person walking into the future with their back towards it, face turned towards the past, we honour how faithful God has been through each chapter of leadership that has come before, and yet we continue to pursue fresh vision for what's ahead.

The values of family-style community and gathering around the table together remain front and center in our gatherings.





Our Beginnings

Forest Brook Community Church began in 1980 in Pickering, born out of a shared vision among a small group of believers to plant a Brethren church in the growing region between Scarborough and Oshawa. At the time, Durham Region was still largely made up of farmland, small villages, and undeveloped land, even as the City of Toronto continued expanding eastward into suburbia. The founding members recognized the importance of establishing a local church presence within the communities where families were settling, building relationships, and putting down roots. In many ways, this early vision continues to shape who we are today as we seek to live out our faith where we “live, work, go to school, and play.”

Our Foundations

Rooted in the Brethren tradition, many of Forest Brook’s early members came from churches such as Bendale Bible Chapel and Don Valley Bible Chapel. This tradition emphasized a strong commitment to Scripture, elder leadership, congregational autonomy, and weekly Communion. While Forest Brook now identifies as a non-denominational community church, many of these values remain central to who we are. We continue to prioritize biblical teaching, shared leadership, and the Lord’s Table as an important part of our weekly gatherings.



Our Home and Community

Forest Brook first met at Vaughn Willard Public School in Pickering before eventually moving into facilities in Pickering and Ajax. Both properties were generously sold to the church for one dollar by John Boddy Homes and were funded through the sacrificial generosity of the congregation. After moving into our current building on Kearney Drive, the church became known as Forest Brook Community Church, reflecting a growing desire to serve and welcome the surrounding neighbourhood. Today, our facility is used regularly by community groups, events, camps, and local organizations, and we continue to see our church as a place that exists not only for ourselves, but for our wider community.

Our Leadership and Future

Throughout our history, Forest Brook has been shaped by the belief that every person has gifts and abilities to contribute to the life of the church. From the beginning, the church has been led by elders and faithful volunteers, later adding staff roles to support the growing ministry. Today, our leadership continues through a collaborative model that brings together elders, board members, and staff as we seek God's direction together for the future of our church.



LEGACY & ***LEADERSHIP***

We encourage each one who considers Forest Brook their spiritual home to wrestle with the concepts of legacy and leadership.

How might God be inviting you to be a part of His legacy; how might God be inviting you to step into leadership for the future?

HOW WE VIEW **OUR SPACE**



We've always viewed our building at 60 Kearney Drive as a big, huge blessing. The reason it's even 'ours' to call home in the first place is undoubtedly the generosity and kindness of a local developer who prioritized faith centers alongside new neighbourhood developments. God's provision is a throughline for Forest Brook when it comes to building purchase, financing and maintenance. This means that we both steward it well, and share it generously. More and more we are discovering the ways our facility can embody the missional identity, and listening for how God might want us to reimagine its use for the sake of our community.

We often pray that the Spirit of God would inhabit our space in such obvious and tangible ways that whoever enters gets a taste of God's goodness and peace. We desire to use our building as a base for activities that support our mission, without making it the center of our identity.

What this looks like:

We don't consider any part of our building or its furniture to be untouchable, sacred or off-limits.

The booking of rentals and internal programming is given great care and attention ensuring that our values are reflected in our schedule.





HOW WE VIEW OUR PLACE

We believe that the frontline of ministry is where we live, work, go to school and play. Through this lens, place is a multifaceted concept. Becoming good neighbours in our physical footprint in Ajax, as well as the neighbourhoods we inhabit when we scatter is an important way we join God's mission.

Beyond interaction, we desire to participate and contribute in meaningful ways to our communities. As a church family we long to grow our partnerships with local initiatives, and build meaningful relationships well beyond our church walls. We believe in the power of 'witness', radical hospitality to strangers and mutuality - receiving from our community can feel uncomfortable, but is imperative in authentic relationships.

What this looks like:

*A posture of openness and curiosity towards our neighbours, a willingness to learn from and about our neighbourhood contexts
Joining/leading/fostering a network of community partners in the Ajax region, with the flourishing of our neighbourhood in mind.*



IN IT TOGETHER

We strive to be a community where everyone belongs. We value the way God expresses His image through one another, and depend on the diversity among us to understand His character more fully. We see ourselves as a family; the many roles, personalities, gifts and perspectives creating a supportive, inclusive and safe environment to grow, discover and share experiences. And likewise, a place where each one contributes in the unique way they're wired. We share the responsibilities and 'work' together toward a common vision.

Across every generation and ministry area, we fix our eyes on the same horizon. At the same time, we cultivate imagination and release creativity towards our common goal. We hope to encourage the right balance of alignment and autonomy to experience the spectrum of God's creativity at work, use our resources well, and move together. It begins with a missional heart and a posture that is open and eager to join God's work in the world.

When we are Gathered:

You don't have to be hired staff or a member of the Elders Leadership Group (or anything else 'official') to lead at Forest Brook. We value the mix of voices in our gatherings through preaching, leading worship, praying, hosting, sharing stories and leading communion. Participation in our gatherings can look like offering a friendly hello at the door, preparing and serving coffee, shepherding children, holding babies, keeping our facility safe, or preparing and serving communion. Throughout every Forest Brook ministry area, leaders are empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead, guide, serve and help, and to implement church-wide focuses within their scope.

In our own Communities

We embody an ethos of implementing and mobilizing our shared vision where we live, work, go to school and play. We live empowered, contribute to our communities, and share life with our neighbours. We look for opportunities to join God's work around us, and actively participate in that wherever we go.

How we work together:

The concept of collaboration is deeply linked to creation and reflective of our Creator. In collaboration, we take all the elements available to us, interact with them together and create something new. Collaboration calls us to be working toward a shared vision of the final outcome, each bringing our unique contribution - time, treasure or talent to the table.

A collaborative environment puts emphasis and priority on teamwork, open communication and collective problem-solving. The nature of a collaborative environment inherently incorporates shared vision, humility and trust. The temptation to 'silo' is an ever-present reality in a church structure, and one that we resist. Our vision asks for something that reflects the trinitarian relationship - interconnected and deferential to one another.



DISCERNING **TOGETHER**

We believe that God speaks to us – and because of that, we have a responsibility to listen and respond. The role of listening to God is a core calling in our leadership - we seek God's presence, wisdom and peace before we move forward.

The act of listening and responding is key to our spiritual formation - individually and as a group. As we listen, we begin to discern where God is at work. As we discern, we are given clarity as to where we might be called next. As we move to where we sense God's call, we gain a sense of His presence and call.

We sense that our role as leaders is more often to be in the position to lead vs. react. We seek to be led to where God would call us instead of driven by the demands around us. In order to do this we need to set aside proactive time to listen and discern, seeking to be 'ahead' of the next season of church life, while thoughtfully leading through the 'right now' and communicating well about where we're headed next.



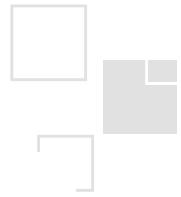
We desire to continue to grow in our collective discernment practice.

This requires setting time aside to ask the right questions and seek God's insight for what comes next. It will require examining how we spend our time, how we meet and set agendas and a resistance to move and react on every impulse before seeking God's lead.

This will also require us to continue to invite more and more people into this process with us – creating an environment where our collective impulse is to listen, discern and be agile to respond to God's call for Forest Brook.



MEMBERSHIP AT FOREST BROOK



Belonging in the local church expresses itself in several ways. Our prayer is that everyone who attends and participates in the life of this community considers it to be their church home. Our covenantal responsibility to one another is rooted in God's instructions around our 'one-anothering' — as the evidence of His love among us, and a testimony of His goodness to the world around us.

As a church, we're also a formally incorporated organization through the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, also known as ONCA. This holds us accountable to operate legally and practice good governance. It also creates accountability in our financial

management and allows us to practice generosity in our community.

Under this act, individuals can become corporate members of our church. This allows members to have governance-related opportunities and responsibilities that are upheld by our bylaws. This includes things like: voting at Annual General Meetings, access to audited financial statements, and participating in the selection and election of elders. Choosing to become a corporate member gives you the opportunity to share in our stewardship and organizational health. Within our structure, this also allows you to be considered for leadership roles, such as an elder or a director on our Board.

MEMBERSHIP AT FOREST BROOK (CONTINUED)

The opportunity to become a corporate member is more fully articulated through a membership process. This process can take several forms - in a group setting, or through dialogue with staff and elders. Through this, we share information about who we are - our history, our practices and the ways that we operate. We share in conversation, learning more about one another and the stories that brought us together here at Forest Brook. Finally, when people do choose to become members, we celebrate; it means a lot to us when people choose to join us in this meaningful way



So, welcome to Forest Brook. A community of Jesus followers on a collective journey to listen and discern God's voice, listen to one another and listen to our community.

What you read here is a living and evolving articulation of where God is leading us as His church. We're grateful to journey alongside you, and excited about where God will take us next.



A CO-MISSIONING PRAYER

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we commission you to reflect God's love, follow Jesus and bring hope to your neighbours - where you live, work, go to school and play.

May following Jesus permeate every aspect of your life, and may you live confidently in God's love. We commission you to share in God's mission to restore the world He loves.

May we be good neighbours - open and curious with our teammates, co-workers, teachers, students, friends, clients, community leaders and strangers - learning to work together for the good of our cities, loving freely, sharing hope and offering peace.

May we be radically hospitable - noticing those who are overlooked or excluded, and tell them they're seen and welcome, and simply go be 'with' them....

...May we 'read the winds', seeing God at work in the world around us, and responding as He invites. May we carry with us only what we really need, so that we're agile and ready.

May we listen, learn and discern together - holding plans loosely, and putting down anything that's holding us back - because God, your way is better.

May we become more and more like Jesus as we follow Him - more and more who we were made to be.

When we gather big, or small, may it be a safe space for all of us to belong.

May we choose relationships over structures and systems, and care deeply for one another. May we bravely bring our whole selves to our covenantal community, because we know our whole self is accepted here....

...May we share the Jesus Story, and our own stories, and celebrate as they intersect and continue to be written in our world today.

May we, Forest Brook, fix our eyes on the same horizon, and use our imaginations and creativity to journey towards that horizon together.

God, we are your church, and it's your Spirit who empowers us to collaborate and lead, to worship and pray, to play and to grow, to work and study, to explore and move, to flourish in every season. We choose to bring your Dream into reality - together - and may YOUR Kingdom come - in our homes and our workplaces and our schools and our arenas, dance studios and pickleball courts, in our town halls and our street corners, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Amen!