



MEMBERSHIP MANUAL

So we, who are many, are one body in Christ,
and individually members of one another.

— ROMANS 12:5

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WHY MEMBERSHIP?

WE BELIEVE THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE REASONS for having formal church membership. First, membership in a local church is a biblical concept. While you won't find the term "church member" in the New Testament, you will find that believers clearly identified themselves with a specific local church where they were called to become committed participants. Second, having a formal membership core helps the pastors and other leaders in their God-given task of shepherding. By design, Cornerstone attracts some people who are uncommitted- seekers, observers and guests. May this always be the case! However, it is also important for church leaders to be able to identify those who are the core participants that can be counted on to sustain and build the ministries of the church. Third, membership benefits you as an individual. Recognizable membership in the church can be an important step that moves believers from the haziness of good intentions to clear, committed participation. It presents a challenge to "stand and be counted" for Christ in relationship to this particular local church. As such, membership can be a significant "defining moment" in a person's discipleship journey.

POSITIONAL & PARTICIPATING

BUT WHAT IS A "MEMBER" EXACTLY? This is a fair question and requires some clarification, because the New Testament actually points to two types of "membership." First, scripture is full of references as to how every person who receives salvation through Jesus Christ becomes a "member" of the universal and eternal family of God (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:13-22; 4:3-6). This can be called "positional membership." But then, the Bible also urges believers to continue growing by becoming "participating members" of a specific local church through active involvement in building up that church body (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; 14:12; Hebrews 10:24-25).

5 CS OF MEMBERSHIP

AT THE HEART OF CORNERSTONE MEMBERSHIP is a commitment to participate in the life of this church by simply following Jesus -- to value what he values and to live as he calls us to live. We have attempted to sum up the basic criteria for participating membership at Cornerstone using 5 "C" words:

CHRIST-CENTRED

Disciples cultivate a lifelong personal relationship with God through Christ, increasingly reflecting the likeness of Jesus in all aspects of life. This relationship begins with individual acceptance of the saving work of Christ, followed by baptism as a believer, and is nurtured through ongoing spiritual disciplines, such as Bible intake/application and prayer. (John 1:12, 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 6:3-4)

CONNECTED

Disciples honour God's call to participate in Christian community. For this reason, Christ-followers are committed to relational connection in a small group or team of believers for the purpose of mutual encouragement, support, and accountability. (Acts 2:46)

CONTAGIOUS

Disciples seek to extend the love and grace they've received from God to others through personal evangelism and participation in the church's various outreach ministries to the community and the world. (Matthew 28:19-20)

CONTRIBUTING

Disciples discover, develop and deploy their unique, God-given spiritual gifts to serve others and further the ministry of the church. Through a lifestyle of good financial stewardship, they also build God's kingdom by the practice of regular tithing and offering. (Romans 12:6-13; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

CELEBRATING

Disciples give priority to the corporate gatherings of the church for the purposes of worship, receiving biblical teaching, and participating in the sacrament of communion. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Do you desire to grow as a follower of Jesus in the above areas through involvement in the life of Cornerstone? If so, then as a church, we want to formally affirm and celebrate that fact by inviting you to become a participating member!

MORE ABOUT GROWING THAN JOINING

The membership process will give you an opportunity to reflect on your own walk with Christ and consider what further steps you can take on the road to becoming a fully devoted follower of Jesus. We hope that the membership process will ultimately help you grow as a disciple!

HOW DO I BECOME A PARTICIPATING MEMBER OF CORNERSTONE?

The process of becoming a member has four stages:

CLASS or SELF-STUDY – The prospective member attends a membership class designed to underscore the biblical meaning of membership and the ministry philosophy of Cornerstone. Those unable to attend a class can complete a self-study instead.

APPLICATION – The candidate completes the membership application form in the back of this manual, noting any questions or concerns that need to be discussed in the confirmation interview.

INTERVIEW – The prospective member meets with a church leader (usually a Ministerial Staff member) to discuss the affirmations made and to confirm participating membership. This stage provides another opportunity for applicants to ask any questions they may have.

CELEBRATION – New members are briefly introduced and prayed for at Sunday service so that our whole community can rejoice together!

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF MEMBERS?

AGAIN, the main responsibility of every member of Cornerstone is to participate in the life of the church by simply following Christ. That which qualifies you as a participating member— as laid out in the 5 Cs— is all that will ever be expected of you: live with *Christ as the center* of your life, be relationally *connected* in the church, develop a contagious lifestyle of sharing God’s love with others, *contribute* to the growth and effectiveness of the church by serving according to your spiritual gifts and by faithful financial stewardship and giving, and *celebrate* regularly in weekly worship at Cornerstone.

NOT PERFECTION

BUT LET’S BE CRYSTAL CLEAR on one thing: *We don’t expect perfection from any of our members!* All of us, pastors and leaders included, are works in progress, and are never immune to mistakes, slips and sin. By becoming a participating member of Cornerstone, you are not being asked to commit to an unattainable standard, but are simply saying that with God’s help, you intend to seek ongoing personal development as a follower of Jesus. God never commands us to do anything that he will not enable us to do in his strength.

FOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK at the requirements of membership is to break them down into the following four areas:

- 1. PERSONAL PURITY:** To bring to the church a self that is submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Our connection with the Lord is the source of everything we have to give to others. As Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). A yielded heart is a powerful tool in God’s hands. When we turn our lives over fully to God, and are quick to confess our sins to him when we get off track, we will be able to bring to the church the great gift of personal purity and spiritual maturity.

2. RELATIONAL INTEGRITY: To pursue honourable and loving relationships in our families, among friends, coworkers, and neighbours, and in the church.

“A diseased liver will eventually stop a healthy heart from beating.” Our relational world is a lot like our physical body – we cannot afford to neglect any part of it and think it will have no adverse affect on other parts of our lives. Participating members of Cornerstone will take seriously the Bible’s admonition: “So far as it is up to you, live at peace with all people” (Romans 12:18). We must pursue loving behaviour with all people in our lives, and reconciliation in strained relationships wherever possible.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL LOYALTY: To contribute to the church your time, talents, and treasure and to be responsive to the church leadership God has established.

If you are a member of Cornerstone, your participation should be evident. Other than passively attending services, what does your calendar show about your connection to the church? Would God see you as a team player rather than a bench-sitter at Cornerstone? If everyone was involved with the same degree of passion and faithfulness as you are, would this be a healthy church? Does your service and cooperation make church leaders glad you’re part of the team? Also, participating members should make attendance at membership meetings (usually held each year in early December) a priority for the purposes of being informed on church direction and business, participating in any decisions at hand, and achieving a membership quorum (51% of members must be present for voting purposes).

4. INTERPERSONAL MATURITY: To seek to serve more than to be served.

When Jesus washed his disciples’ feet – a task normally reserved for common servants – he asked them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you

should also do as I did to you” (John 13:12-15). Christians can easily slip into a consumer mentality, wanting “the church” to “meet my needs.” But the church is all of us. We’re not shoppers at a spiritual convenience store. “Meeting needs” is not just the responsibility of pastors and leaders, but also of each Cornerstone member. Only when everyone takes part in serving and caring for others do all the needs get met, and we experience what Jesus meant when he said it is more blessed to give than to receive. The Saviour set the standard and calls us all into the “foot-washing” business!

PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

Participating members of Cornerstone also have certain privileges. Specifically, being a participating member gives you the opportunity to influence key decisions of the church, including the approval of the annual budget and other major ministry directional and financial decisions. On occasion, certain “members only” meetings are called to inform the core church participants of major concerns and garner input from them. Finally, certain leadership positions in the church require participating membership. Also, qualified members may apply for financial subsidies for theological education or full-time missionary support through the Association of Christian Evangelical Ministries (ACEM). The main reason to become a member, however, is not to gain personal advantage, but to identify with a particular local church for the sake of pursuing spiritual maturity and serving Christ.

CORNERSTONE’S STORY

IT ALL BEGAN WITH 35 PEOPLE AND A DREAM. The first public worship service of Christian Community Church was held in February 1998 in a rented community center hall. To understand that beginning, however, you must go back further to 1994, when a core of 35 people from the English congregation of Toronto Chinese Community Church began praying and planning to launch a new church in the Markham area. Their God-inspired vision was that this church would be intentionally intercultural— designed to reach not only those of Chinese heritage, but also people from a wide variety of ethnicities and backgrounds. This core group imagined a church

that would be a welcoming, relevant and safe place for the unchurched to hear the dangerous message of Jesus, as well as a place where people could develop into fully devoted followers of Christ. Furthermore, it was envisioned that this new church would become a major force for God and good in the greater community.

In June 1996, this group held their first public service as the English congregation of Markham Christian Community Church, at Kennedy Road and Denison Street.

There the congregation grew until it relocated its services in early 1998 to the Markham Village Community Centre at Highways 7 and 48, and at that time it also took on a new church name: Cornerstone. Over the next four years, many individuals gave their lives to Christ, several new small groups and ministry teams were formed, and thousands of community residents were served in loving, practical ways through the church's outreach ministries.

As a result of steady growth, Cornerstone eventually began to feel the pinch of limited space at the community centre. Following a season of prayerful searching, God provided the church with a new worship location- Markville Secondary School at McCowan Road and Carlton Street.

Cornerstone continued to thrive in this new location. Many people who visited Cornerstone were drawn to its vision and to what God was doing in and through the church. The church continued to grow - not just in numbers but also in diversity, with over 35 countries of origin represented. Ministries also continued to grow and expand.

During this time, the Lord gave Cornerstone a God-sized vision to see many more lives transformed for Jesus in Markham. The dream was to construct a facility that would combine the concepts of church building and community centre. This unique facility, called *Cornerstone Centre*, would not only meet the needs of this church's members, but would also enrich and empower everyone in the greater community. It would be a place where:

- meaningful friendships are built and diversity celebrated,
- bodies are strengthened and minds stimulated,
- life skills are learned and family ties fortified
- broken lives are healed, the needy cared for, and faith developed,
- people gather together regularly not only for worship, but also

for sports and recreation, children's activities, youth gatherings, municipal events, meals, concerts, intercultural festivals, support and recovery groups, blood donor clinics, or just to hang out in the cafe.

In 2014, Cornerstone began construction on this facility. On September 13, 2015, Cornerstone held its first worship service in Cornerstone Centre. And within the first two years of opening, our congregation has more than doubled in size! People are excited about the God-sized vision God has given this church and want to join us in His mission to restore this world through Jesus!

We're excited that you are considering becoming part of Cornerstone's story by becoming a member. Together, we're poised to make a substantial impact for God's kingdom with Cornerstone Centre as a vital tool for connecting with the community God has called us to serve.

CORNERSTONE'S DISTINCTIVES

CORNERSTONE'S VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS, explained on the following pages, are deeply rooted in Jesus' own mission. He came from heaven to earth with a clear sense of his purpose in life. Even at age 12, he told his parents, "Did you not know I had to be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). His single-mindedness, determination, and reliance on his Heavenly Father's guidance ensured that at the end of his life, he could pray, "I have accomplished the work which you gave me to do" (John 17:4). Jesus would often say no to certain opportunities when they didn't mesh with his purpose in life. He was appropriately selective about the people and possibilities in which he invested his limited time and energy for the sake of accomplishing his God-given mission: "The Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost." (Luke 19:10)

Cornerstone has developed statements of purpose reflective of these and other biblical imperatives that speak to our unique history, profile, and placement as a local congregation. Just as Jesus had a clear sense of mission, the following statements help Cornerstone to be clear on what we're all about, so that we can remain focused and effective in fulfilling our God-given purposes as a church.

VISION STATEMENT

Our Vision Statement is a biblically-rich and motivating word picture that expresses what we're all about as a church.

Embracing the Jesus who embraces the world.

The idea of “embrace” captures the essence of Jesus’ great dual-commandment to love God and others (Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:25-37). We love God by embracing His Son, Jesus (John 8:42; 14:10). We love others by embracing those that Jesus embraces (1 John 4:20-21), and on the cross, Jesus embraced the world. His embrace encompasses people of all races, nationalities, social and economic statuses, and walks of life. Our own embrace of Jesus and the world is made possible only because we are first embraced by God, who “so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16; see also 1 John 4:19). The following well-known prayer wonderfully expresses the spirit of Cornerstone’s Vision Statement:

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching out our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you, for the honour of your name. Amen.

(The Book of Common Prayer)

Jesus died on the cross not only to make us right with God (Romans 5:1), but also to make us right with each other. God cancels the hostility between us in Christ, and brings us to embrace (Ephesians 2:15-18, The Message). In this sense, our vision statement also reminds us that the relationship of those within our church should be characterized by loving unity and reconciliation (Colossians 3:12-14).

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission Statement is what we do to live out our Vision. It targets a particular need in the public we serve with a special blessing.

Making space for Jesus to shape people together in God’s love.

Making space: In this case, both the need and the blessing have to do with making space for Jesus. Like most North Americans, people in Markham and the Greater Toronto Area tend to be “space-challenged” people, with overcrowded lifestyles, preoccupied minds, and cluttered hearts. As we create a wide variety of “spaces” for Jesus – both for ourselves as well as for people in the greater community – He will fill lives with His beautiful, transforming presence (Revelation 3:20). Our Mission Statement challenges us to acknowledge and address the ways that Jesus tends to get crowded out of people’s lives, including our own. It also compels us to consider what “creating space for Jesus” might look like in our hearts and minds, our daily lives and work, our homes and families, our worship services and ministries, as well as our church facilities.

For Jesus: You’ve probably noticed that our Vision and Mission Statements are strongly centred on the person of Jesus – and for good reason. The Bible teaches that if you want to know what God is like and what his purposes are, then you need to focus on Jesus (Heb. 1:3, John 14:9, Col 1:15). Jesus reigns over his people and shapes and leads them as the head of the church (Eph. 4:15, 5:23). Jesus is also the Giver of Life (John 10:10) and the one who gives us the strength and divine power we need (John 15:5-8, Phil. 4:13).

To shape people together in God’s love: As we create space for Jesus, He will shape people together in God’s love by the power of His Spirit. Being shaped in Christ-like love is the very centre of God’s purposes for all of us (Romans 8:29, *The Message*; Matthew 22:37-40; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3). As we create space for Jesus, He will shape diverse peoples together into a community of unity that embodies His love to each other, to the greater community, and to the world.

DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

But how do we go about fulfilling this mission of *Making Space for Jesus to Shape People Together in God's love*? That's where Cornerstone's "Discipleship Pathway" comes in.

A *disciple* is someone who follows Jesus as Master, and *discipleship* can be defined as “BEING with Jesus to LEARN from Jesus how to BECOME like Jesus.” The goal of discipleship is to become like Jesus in character. As he put it:

It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher,
and a servant like his master." (Matt. 10:25a NKJV).

The Discipleship Pathway consists of 5 Es that interact dynamically throughout your lifetime as you become more and more like Jesus:

ESTABLISH Identity in Jesus: Spaces for Jesus to shape our sense of who we are in Him.

EMBODY the Jesus Way of Life: Spaces for learning how to put the teaching of Jesus into practice in daily life.

EXPLORE Jesus' Call to Life Mission: Spaces for discovering Jesus' unique callings on our lives.

EXTEND Jesus' Love in Life Mission: Spaces for joining God's world-restoring mission in Jesus.

EXPERIENCE Jesus' Care & Healing: Spaces for Jesus to make the broken and needy whole.

Every ministry at Cornerstone is tied into this framework in one way or another. We have even developed a custom spiritual life assessment process called the *Discipleship Pathway Reflection Tool* to help you discern your next step in growing closer to Jesus.

CORE VALUES

While we have many values as a church, the following ones especially stand out for Cornerstone. These are the key behavior patterns we will hold ourselves rigorously accountable to in living out our Vision and Mission:

Prayer: We strive to pray without ceasing, in order to draw near and minister to God, and participate in bringing about His will on earth. (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Matthew 6:10)

Faith & Obedience: We show our trust in God's faithfulness and goodness by doing what He says. (James 2:17)

All-of-Life Spirituality: We grow in Jesus by offering every aspect of our lives to God. (Romans 12:1-2)

Unity-in-Diversity: We celebrate each person's uniqueness, while eagerly pursuing loving, harmonious relationships with each another. (Ephesians 2:14-18; 4:3; Romans 12:4-5)

Biblical Hospitality: We welcome the stranger into our church, homes, hearts and lives as God has welcomed us in Christ. (Leviticus 19:33-34; Hebrews 13:2)

Empowerment: We encourage and equip people to discover and live out their God-given gifts, passions, and callings in all arenas of life. (1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:11-12)

Generosity: We are called to be extravagantly generous because God has been extravagantly generous to us in Jesus. (2 Corinthians 8:7-9)

Creativity: We enjoy the freedom to adapt and innovate in life and ministry according to God's purposes. (Genesis 1:27-28)

BEDROCK STATEMENT

Bedrock is an underlying foundation that provides stability. Our Bedrock Statement is taken directly from scripture. It reminds us where to turn for strength in times of crisis or trouble, and how we can always find hope for tomorrow.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.

When living in line with our Vision, Mission and Core Values results in

confusion or stress, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, remembering:

- His keen memory of God's past faithfulness
- His unwavering hope in God's promise
- His obedience in suffering
- His perseverance in the face of opposition

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:2-3, emphasis added)

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Primarily, Cornerstone affirms the great creeds of the Christian Church as the essentials or "non-negotiables" of our faith. One such creed is the famous Apostles Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to the dead.
On the third day He rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic [universal/worldwide] church,
the communion of saints [all believers],
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. AMEN.**

There are always people present at Cornerstone who have not yet come to the place in their spiritual journey where they can personally affirm the truths of the Apostles Creed. We want to make it clear that such persons are always welcome in our church, because Jesus Himself always welcomed spiritual seekers.

While we also have specific convictions that speak to matters beyond the Apostle's Creed (see our Statement of Faith below), when it comes to the doctrinal issues that might be deemed more secondary, Cornerstone's spirit is best captured in the following words attributed to St. Augustine:

In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love.

The people who make up Cornerstone Christian Community Church come from diverse backgrounds and a variety of Christian theological perspectives. We do not exclude anyone on the basis of a different view on baptism, gifts of the spirit, predestination vs. freewill, or any other matter of honest theological disagreement among members of the Christian Church. However, we do ask that all Cornerstone members respect the church's Statement of Faith, and to never make a secondary theological issue a matter of disunity in the church. If a secondary matter of faith is so important to you as to be non-negotiable for church life, then we suggest you find another church with like-minded people where you can fellowship. However, if you can respect Cornerstone's Statement of Faith, and are willing to maintain a spirit of loving *unity-in-diversity* (which is one of our Core Values), then Cornerstone may very well be the church for you to commit to as a full participating member.

The people of Cornerstone are not connected because we all dot our theological "i's" and cross our theological "t's" in the exact same way, but because we align ourselves with a common Vision, Mission and Core Values as Jesus' disciples in the City of Markham. So, to repeat, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things love." We agree on enough to get our God-given mission accomplished!

CORNERSTONE'S STATEMENT OF FAITH

The following are the essential beliefs of Cornerstone Christian Community Church.

THE BIBLE

The sole basis of our belief is the Bible, composed of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. We believe that Scripture in its entirety originated with God and that it was given through the instrumentality of chosen men and women. Scripture thus at one and the same time speaks with the authority of God and reflects the backgrounds, styles, and vocabularies of the human authors. We hold that the Scriptures are infallible in the original manuscripts, being the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

GOD

We believe in one true and living God, eternally existing in three persons- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit- each of whom equally possesses all the attributes of deity and personhood. God is the creator and supreme ruler of the universe, the heavens, the earth and all things therein. By his power, he continues to sustain his creation, and by his providence, he is operating throughout history to fulfill his redemptive purposes.

THE CONDITION OF HUMANITY

Originally created to have fellowship with God, man defied God, choosing to go his own independent way. As a result, man was alienated from God and suffered the corruption of his nature, rendering him unable to please God. This fall of the human race took place at the beginning of human history, and all individuals since have suffered these consequences and are thus in need of the saving grace of God.

THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. He offered himself as a substitute in our place voluntarily as a sinless sacrifice on the cross, thereby satisfying God's righteous judgment against sin. After substantiating the accomplishment of that redemption by his bodily resurrection from the grave, he ascended to the right hand of his Father where he intercedes on behalf of those who trust Him.

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the God the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He was sent into the world by the Father and the Son to

apply the saving work of Christ. He enlightens the minds of sinners, awakens in them the recognition of their need for a Saviour, and spiritually regenerates them. At the moment of salvation, he permanently indwells every believer, baptizing (or placing) them into the one true church, which is the body of Christ. He seals them for the day of redemption, bestows spiritual gifts upon them, and fills (or controls) those who are yielded to Him.

SALVATION

Salvation is the gift of God's grace, and is not the result, in whole or in part, of human works of goodness. All who personally appropriate salvation through repentance and faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross are forgiven their sins and born into the family of God by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

THE CHURCH

There is one true universal church which consists of all those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. The Scripture commands believers to gather together to devote themselves to worship, prayer, the teaching of the Bible, the observance of baptism and the Lord's supper, service to the body of believers through the development and use of talents and spiritual gifts, and outreach to the world.

Wherever God's people meet regularly in obedience to this command, there is the local expression of the universal church. Under the care of its pastors and leaders, its members are to work together in love and unity, intent on the one ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ.

THE SACRAMENTS

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ instituted two ordinances to be observed by believers until His return, baptism and the Lord's Supper, also known as Communion.

CHRISTIAN LIFE

We believe that the life of the believer is to be separated from worldliness by consistent conduct before God and man, and is at the same time to be in the world as life-giving light, bearing fruit to the glory of God the Father. It is possible for the believer to lead such a life of Christ-like character when he appropriates the power and control of the indwelling Holy Spirit by faith.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

We believe in the imminent, personal, and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth, to consummate history and the eternal plan of God.

THE ETERNAL STATE

Death seals the eternal destiny of each person. For all mankind, there will be a resurrection of the body into the spiritual world and a judgment that will determine the fate of each individual. Unbelievers will be separated from God into eternal condemnation. God's judgment will reveal his justice in consigning them to the eternal perpetuation of their own choice to reject him. Believers will be received into eternal communion with God and will be rewarded for works done in this life.

ON BEING AN INTERCULTURAL CHURCH

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek,
slave nor free, male nor female.

(Galatians 3:28)

GREATER TORONTO IS ONE OF THE MOST ethnically and culturally diverse areas in the world. According to Statistics Canada, Markham itself is officially the most diverse community in Canada with over 65 cultures and languages and with 65.4% of the population belonging to visible minorities. Also, much of this diverse population shares English as a common language, not unlike the diverse peoples in the ancient Roman world of the first Christians who shared a version of Greek called *Koine* as a common language. While very grateful for our heritage in the English-speaking Chinese church, Cornerstone was established upon the profound biblical conviction that when legitimate language and geographical barriers are no longer in play, no good reasons remain for Christians to segregate from one another along ethnic or socioeconomic lines (Galatians 3:28). An intentionally intercultural ministry is a demonstration of the power of the risen Christ to bring diverse peoples together in the love and worship of one Lord (Ephesians 4:4-6).

When people of diverse backgrounds unite together under the banner of Jesus, there is a beacon-like effect through which Christ draws outsiders to himself (John 17:20-24).

Through his death, Christ has demolished the barriers that tend to separate people (Ephesians 2:14-22), and therefore wherever possible, the church should seek to visibly demonstrate the intercultural reality of God’s kingdom. God values diversity so much that he intends to eternally establish his kingdom as an intercultural community (Revelation 7:9; 15:4).

Our Vision Statement— “Embracing the Jesus who embraces the world”— is a great reminder of all this. We remember that on the cross Jesus embraced the *world*. This embrace includes people of all races, nationalities, ethnic and social backgrounds, and abilities. In Markham, we live in an ideal context to realize this vision of embrace. As a member of Cornerstone, you can help make this vision a reality by:

- *Building friendships* with people from other ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds and inviting them to church.
- Making extra effort to help guests from differing backgrounds feel welcome at church.
- Being involved in Cornerstone’s various outreach ministries to our diverse community.

Furthermore, we seek to see this vision reflected in our *staffing* and church leadership.

ON BEING A COMMUNITY-ORIENTED CHURCH

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus teaches that his church is the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.” Salt and light are influencing agents, which respectively prevent decay, and dispel darkness. When Jesus refers to his followers as “salt” and “light,” he is saying that we should be agents of influence for him wherever we are.

Unfortunately, local churches are sometimes strangers to their own communities, failing to have any significant influence in the very neighborhoods where they are planted. This is not what Jesus had in mind for his church. As church consultant and author Paul Nixon says, “If the people who live nearest to us never experience an open door into our faith community, something is seriously wrong.”

Instead, the New Testament concept is that the local church exists not for

itself, but for the wider community of which it is a part. At Cornerstone, our desire is to increasingly be a salty, light-giving presence here in Markham, and beyond. Our motto over the years has been that we want to be **a church that would be missed** — that the community would actually feel the poorer for Cornerstone’s absence if for some hypothetical reason we had to close the church or relocate to another area.

We seek to tangibly demonstrate God’s love to our community so that those who live in the shadows of our “steeple” might ultimately experience the life-transforming reality of Christ. In building multiple bridges to the wider community through a variety of holistic, practical acts of service offered in Jesus’ name, we believe we will create multiple potential entry points into the life of the church for our pre-Christian neighbours, where they can be introduced to the Saviour. As a community-oriented church, Cornerstone takes seriously Jesus’ command to, “Let your light shine before people, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). While we never intend to limit our ministry scope to Markham alone, our impact as a local church should be felt most substantially in our immediate community for one very simple but profound reason – God has planted us *here!* To quote Paul Nixon again, “Prevailing churches in the 21st century will, more often than not, be intensely community-oriented.”



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