

**Gathering Together (draft)**  
**(a document to organize)**  
**Middlesex Lambton Huron Association (MLHA)**

**Introduction**

**Name**

This organization shall be called the Middlesex Lambton Huron Association of Baptist Churches (MLHA).  
(Acts 2:42-47)

**Affiliation**

This Association and its Member Churches are affiliated with the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec (CBOQ) and Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM).

**Membership**

The Association's membership consists of Baptist Churches in Middlesex, Lambton and Huron Counties of Ontario. These Churches join voluntarily to support the purposes outlined in this document.

All Representatives to the Association's Celebration Gathering, Fellowship Gatherings, Stewardship Team, Missional teams or other roles must be active members of one of the Association's Churches.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the Association is to strengthen fellowship and mission among the Association Churches by gathering together and by working together:

- To collectively discern the will of the Holy Spirit.
- To share the message of Christ through witness, evangelism and caring for one another in our Churches and communities.
- To provide opportunities for Christian fellowship and inspiration among member Churches.
- To encourage and coordinate cooperation in the shared tasks of member Churches.
- To share the voices of the Churches with CBOQ and CBM.
- To support Canadian Baptist efforts locally and globally by participating in initiatives sponsored by CBOQ and CBM.

**When We Gather**

We are coming together for

- Fellowship --meeting, eating, sharing life together, whether socially or in business
- Stories --recognizing that our faith is expressed and shaped by the testimonies we live and share
- Inspiration --drawing from the Word and being encouraged through Spirit-led conversations and learning
- Worship --gathering to lift our voices, hearts and lives in praise to the God who unites us.

We are welcome to meet together more often than is listed in this document. We can come together in person or by video conferencing.

## **How We Gather**

### **A. Welcoming New Member Churches**

All Association member Churches should seek to discover and encourage suitable churches to join the Association. They should establish fellowship and cooperation with such Churches, with a view to inclusion in the Association. Any Church which may be considered for membership in the Association shall be requested to send a copy of its covenant and/or other relevant information to the association. These documents should be in alignment with our 'Baptist core values' and 'Distinctives' as outlined in CBOQ 'This We Believe'. Those materials would then be examined by the Association for a possible recommendation that such a church be received into Association membership. If the Association so recommends, the Church shall be invited to send Representatives to a special Fellowship Gathering, called to consider the acceptance of the Church into the Association. After hearing the Representatives and an opportunity for discussion, a motion concerning acceptance of the Church may be made. Acceptance will require a 75 percent (75%) majority of attendance. If the Fellowship Gathering accepts the recommendation, it shall be presented to the Celebration Gathering for information.

### **B. Connecting As Association**

Each church has a responsibility to provide personnel and financial support to the Association and has the right to expect similar support from the Association. It is expected that Association Churches will support their pastors in signing the Statement of Ethical Pastoral Conduct from the CBOQ (Appendix A). Furthermore, churches are expected to encourage and support their pastors in maintaining their current accreditation with CBOQ. Each church must balance associating with the Association and considering their local church autonomy issues.

### **C. Church Discipline**

If any member church's behaviour within this body comes into question, it will be addressed as follows: A written recommendation must be presented to the Association's Stewardship Team by a current member church. The Stewardship Team will prayerfully consider this written recommendation and refer to the CBOQ Membership Review Process (or a similar procedure through CBOQ) to resolve the matters that have led to questions or conflict. If these attempts lead to a recommendation to dismiss the church, the Stewardship Team shall notify all churches of the Association at least two months in advance of the intention to present a written recommendation for dismissal to the Fellowship Gathering. Such a recommendation shall require a 75 percent (75%) majority for adoption. If the Fellowship Gathering accepts the recommendation, it shall be presented at the Celebration Gathering for information.

### **Summary**

The Middlesex Lambton Huron Association of Churches affirms the importance of the local congregation as a body of believers established for worship, spiritual growth, fellowship and mission. We value our sense of community in Christ within our churches, the Association, CBOQ and with other Christians. We also value the presence of the Holy Spirit who will guide us.

The Association is a voluntary partnership of local Baptist Churches to strengthen fellowship, provide support and be on mission, to accomplish more together than on our own. Our mission is to glorify God by reaching individuals for Christ through our witness of Christ's love, saving power and presence in our lives.

## **What We Do**

### **Celebration Gathering**

Composition (for the business portion of this Gathering)

- a. Each Member Church may appoint four (4) Representatives plus one (1) additional Representative for every 50 active attendees or major fraction thereof beyond the first 100.
- b. All CBOQ Pastors serving within the Association are included.
- c. All members of the Association Stewardship Team and Missional teams are also included.

Authority

The Celebration Gathering exists to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit and affirm the shared direction of the Association, in partnership with the Stewardship Team and the Member Churches it serves.

Function

- a. The Celebration Gathering must meet at least once a year for inspiration, hearing reports, conducting business and electing officers (i.e. chair, vice-chair, clerk and treasurer), missional teams and other necessary personnel.
- b. Quorum is fifteen (15). When the quorum is not achieved, decisions need to be ratified at the next Fellowship Gathering.

### **Fellowship Gatherings**

Composition (for the business portion of these Gatherings)

- a. Each Member Church may appoint two (2) Representatives.
- b. All CBOQ Pastors serving within the Association are included.
- c. All members of the Stewardship Team and Missional teams are also included.

Function (for the business portion of these Gatherings)

- a. The Fellowship Gatherings shall meet to carry out the work of the Association between sessions of the Celebration Gathering.
- b. The Fellowship Gathering will meet at least three (3) times a year.
- c. Quorum is ten (10). When the quorum is not achieved, decisions need to be ratified at the next Fellowship/Celebration Gathering.

### **Expenses**

The Association shall have the right, in view of its budget requirements, to seek from the Member Churches such funds and dues as may be considered sufficient for its work. Eligible expenses might include travel expenses of the Stewardship Team, and expenses for the Celebration and Fellowship Gatherings. Such expenses will be approved by the Stewardship Team and paid for from Association funds.

### **Order and Visitors**

Order: Business meetings will seek to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit and yet may at times adopt the Parliamentary Rules of Order, with the Chair deciding on all points of order.

Visitors: Recognized visitors may ask questions and share their opinions, but are not allowed to vote unless voting privileges are specifically granted by a motion.

**Association Funds**

The Association funds aim to:

- Support Member Churches with grants or loans to help them carry out ministry more effectively.
- Offer grants to members or adherents of the Association's Churches for attending Youth Leadership Development events, including those sponsored by CBOQ Youth or affiliated camps.

**Administration**

The Stewardship Team will make allocations from the funds.

**Guidelines**

- a. Guidelines for using the funds will be detailed in separate documents for each fund.
- b. Each document will include provisions for making updates to the guidelines.

**Changing the Guidelines**

- a. Changes to fund guidelines require written notice of motion to the Stewardship Team and presentation at a previous Fellowship Gathering or Celebration Gathering.
- b. The changes can then be approved at any Fellowship Gathering or Celebration Gathering.

**Succession Plans**

Each year, MLHA member churches shall be invited to discern and submit recommendations for filling positions. The Stewardship Team shall then discern to put together the Nominations report for the Celebration Gathering.

Each person involved in the Stewardship Team or Missional Teams will have a one (1) year term that can be extended up to six (6) years before she/he must take at least one year off.

**Stewardship Team (Matthew 25:14-30)****Composition**

- a. The Chair, Vice-chair, Clerk and Treasurer.
- b. All Chairpersons or designees of Missional teams are invited to participate.
- c. Two members at Large (e.g. the CBWOQ representative)
- d. Standing invitation to a CBOQ representative.

**Function**

- a. The Stewardship Team will discern the will of the Holy Spirit to carry out the work of the Association between sessions of the Fellowship Gatherings. The Stewardship Team will also help enable the Churches to discern the will of the Holy Spirit.
- b. Quorum is three (3). When the quorum is not achieved, decisions need to be ratified at the next Stewardship Team meeting or via email.

**The Chair**

Shall normally preside at all meetings of the Association, including those of the Celebration Gathering, Fellowship Gatherings, Stewardship meetings and other events arranged by the Association.

Shall be an Ex-officio member of all Missional teams and organizations.

Shall normally be an Association delegate to the Assembly of CBOQ.

Shall act as the lead facilitator to support the work of the Association through the participation of Association Churches.

**The Vice-chair**

Shall normally be available to assist or act in the place of the Chair, as requested by or in the absence of the Chair. It is not assumed that the Vice-chair will become the next Chair.

In the absence of both the Chair and the Vice-chair the Stewardship Team shall choose one of its members to serve as Chair until they can recommend a new Chair.

**The Clerk**

1. Shall be responsible for accurate records of all Association meetings (Celebration Gathering, Fellowship Gatherings and Stewardship Team) meetings not later than two (2) weeks after such meetings.
2. Shall be responsible for the correspondence of the Association.
3. Shall prepare an Annual Book for the Celebration Gathering and distribute copies to each Church Clerk, Pastor, and Stewardship Team member at least two (2) weeks before the Celebration Gathering.

The Report Book should include:

- a. The date, time and location of the Celebration Gathering.
  - b. The Agenda for the Celebration Gathering.
  - c. The minutes of the last Celebration Gathering.
  - d. A report from the Chair and all Missional teams.
  - e. Brief reports from all the Churches of the Association.
  - f. The report of the Treasurer.
  - g. The budget.
  - h. The nominations report.
4. Shall maintain:
    - a. An up-to-date copy of the Constitution; and have copies on hand at Fellowship and Celebration Gatherings.
    - b. An up-to-date list of Association Churches, their pastors and clerk, and all Association Officers and Chairs of Missional teams with phone numbers and emails for all of the above persons.
    - c. Shall make the above list available to all Representatives, Pastors, Officers and Missional team personnel.
  5. Shall receive such honorarium as may be determined by the Celebration or Fellowship Gathering, upon the recommendation of the Stewardship Team.

**The Treasurer**

1. Shall maintain a record of all the financial transactions of the Association.
2. Shall report regularly to the Stewardship Team, Celebration Gathering, and Fellowship Gatherings.
3. Shall pay such accounts as are authorized by the Association.
4. Shall accept and deposit all funds received.
5. Shall prepare, in consultation with the Stewardship Team, a Budget for presentation at the Celebration Gathering.
6. When required or requested by the Stewardship Team, shall arrange for a review engagement of the financial records to be completed.
7. Shall receive such honorarium as may be determined by the Celebration or Fellowship Gathering, upon the recommendation of the Stewardship Team.

**Missional teams (Luke 10:2)**

1. The ongoing missional teams shall consist of at least three (3) persons.

2. Shall elect its own officers at its first meeting after the Celebration Gathering. The first nominated person is responsible to call the first meeting.
3. Shall appoint annually and supervise such sub-committees as may be deemed useful.
4. Shall have the right to co-opt persons with special skills or expertise for specific tasks.
5. Shall request a budget from the Stewardship Team annually.
6. Ad hoc missional teams may also be formed to organize a specific one time event. Such teams would dissolve after the event.

### **The Association Ministry Team**

#### **1. Membership**

There shall be two (2) pastors plus lay person(s) on this team.

#### **2. Responsibilities**

- a. Addressing minister and Church relation concerns, such as pastoral search committees, vacancies, interim ministries, conflicts, and celebrations in consultation with the CBOQ Director of Church Life and Leadership.
- b. Overseeing our chaplaincy in the London hospitals.
- c. Supporting and acting as liaison to any Baptist Chaplain serving in the Association.
- d. Helping candidates seeking ordination by:
  - giving encouragement and care to the candidates every step along the process.
  - meeting with the candidate during her/his training to receive updates on the candidates progress and plans.
  - meeting with the candidate for a final consultation before making a recommendation to the local Church regarding any proceeding towards Ordination.
  - sending a Representative to the final review of the Credentials Committee, to participate in the final decision and recommendation regarding the call of a Council for Ordination.
- e. Assisting in orientation of new pastors in the Association.
- f. Providing encouragement to retired ministers, missionaries and spouse.
- g. Receiving information from the CBOQ Director of Church Life and Leadership relating to the withdrawal of Ordination Credentials of any pastor in the CBOQ.
- h. Communicating with accredited pastors and recognized lay preachers of CBOQ who are not presently active in full-time ministry in the Association.

### **The Canadian Baptist Ministries Team**

#### **Responsibilities**

- a. See that Canadian and overseas missions are presented at a Fellowship Gathering each year (Missionfest or equivalent).
- b. Maintain an up-to-date list of Chairpersons of missions committees of every Association Church with names and emails.

### **Amendments**

Amendments to the Gathering Together document can be made during any regular Fellowship Gathering or Celebration Gathering if:

- a. A written notice of motion has been presented to the Stewardship Team and a prior Fellowship / Celebration Gathering.
- b. The notice of motion has received a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote from the Representatives present and voting.