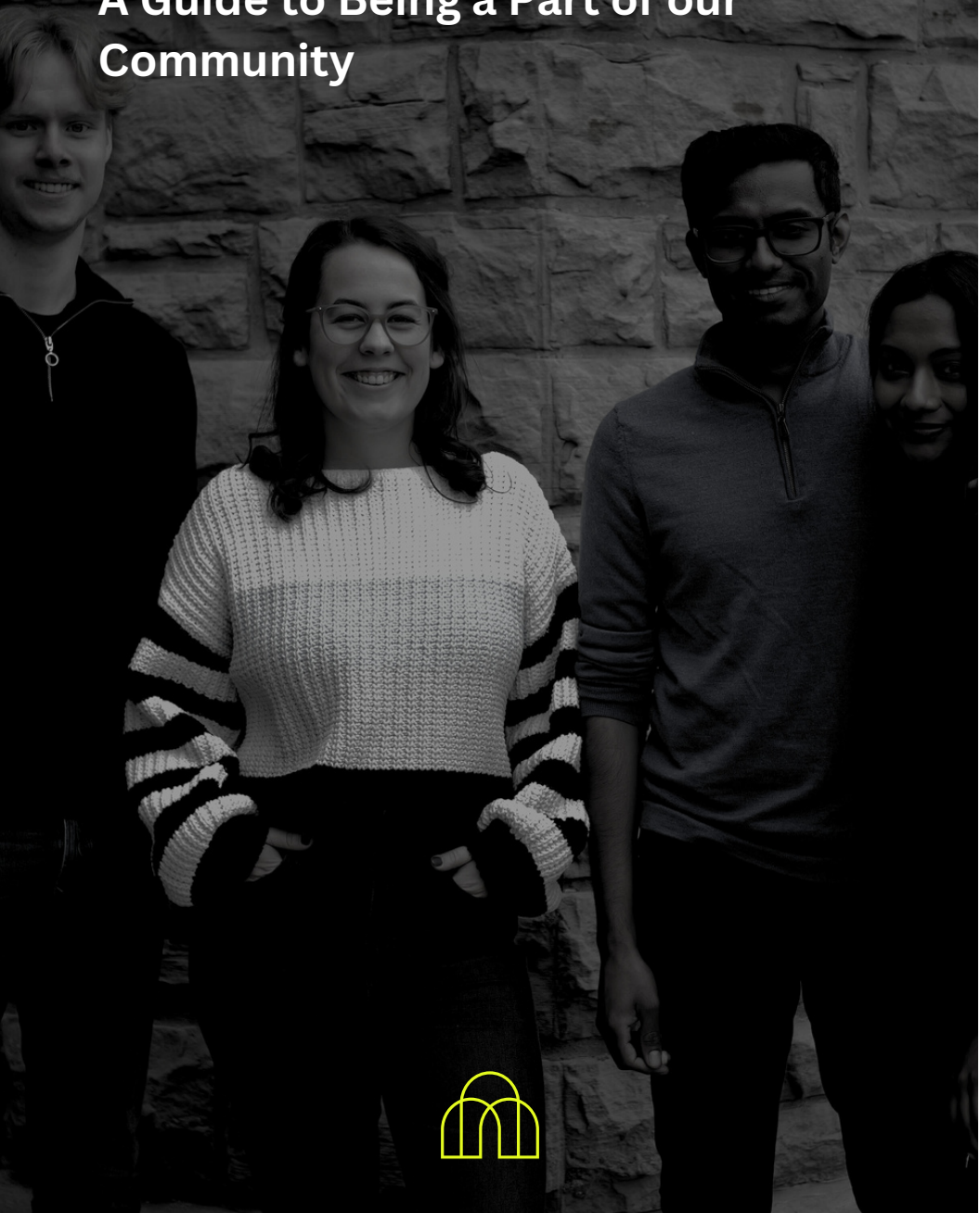


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A Guide to Being a Part of our  
Community





# Table of Contents

<b>Welcome</b>	<b>3</b>
<hr/>	
A Letter from Lead Pastor: Evan Garst	
<b>Who we are</b>	<b>4</b>
<hr/>	
Our Mission	
UNA's History	
Values	
Teams	
<b>First Steps</b>	<b>6</b>
<hr/>	
Step One: Vision	
Step Two: Connection	
Step Three: Leadership	
Step Four: Partnership	
<b>Common Practices</b>	<b>6</b>
<hr/>	
Step One: Vision	
Step Two: Connection	
Step Three: Leadership	
Step Four: Partnership	
<b>Together</b>	<b>7</b>
<hr/>	
Sunday Worship Gathering	
Home Group	
Band	
<b>Families</b>	<b>8</b>
<hr/>	
UNA Kids	
UNA Youth	
Child Dedication / Baptism	
Volunteer and Leadership Team	
<b>Service &amp; Justice</b>	<b>9</b>
<hr/>	
Local	
International	
<b>Contribute Financially</b>	<b>9</b>
<hr/>	



# Welcome!

UNA has been at 54 Benton for a few years now! This home provides us with much needed space for our children and youth, mid-week meetings, a space for our Sunday Gathering and much more. We have discovered new opportunities for mission and outreach in the downtown core of Kitchener that includes Sunday morning food & hygiene products distribution. Needless to say, we are very excited about all that lies ahead of us in the years to come.

There are new people that have become a part of our community of faith. If you are new to UNA... WELCOME! We are really glad that you are here and hope that you find a place of belonging where you can grow in faith, love and hope. I would like to invite you to be curious, ask questions, and get to know some people here. It is entirely possible that you are exploring our church at just the right time for your own spiritual growth and development. I want to encourage you to find ways to contribute to our community through serving and ministry. I have no doubt that you offer something new and good to our community.

I believe that this year marks the beginning of many good things for us as a church community. There are new dreams, visions and opportunities to be explored and discovered. We continue to adjust in our new home at 54 Benton. We can expect fresh ideas and missional initiatives to emerge among us. As we continue to pursue life together as a Jesus centered church, let's pray that Jesus would be actively present among us. Let's also pray that Jesus directs us to new opportunities to serve others.

If you have been a part of the UNA community for a long time then let me encourage you to rejoin your efforts, talent and passion to contribute to all that Jesus continues to do among us.

It is my prayer and hope that, over this next year, we will experience a deeper expression of faith, love and hope together as God's Spirit draws us closer to Jesus, one another and our city.

Evan Garst – Lead Pastor at UNA

# Who We Are

UNA is a community of people pursuing a life of faith in Jesus, committed to loving others and being a voice of God's hope in our neighbourhoods and city.

## Our History

In the fall of 2009 we launched our first public worship gatherings. UNA was formed by a group of 14 people who shared a compelling vision of what God is doing in the world. In the scriptures we discover that God, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, is renewing and redeeming all things and is creating a new humanity in the process. This "new humanity" is made up of local groups of people who express a radical unity in Jesus and set aside the divisions that seem so common in our culture and world. This "new humanity" also bears witness to God's love by sacrificially serving and caring for each other and the people in their neighbourhood and city.

UNA met at Stanley Park Community Centre until the fall of 2014. We relocated to the Kingsdale Community Centre. The Kingsdale neighbourhood became our place to serve and care for others through strategic partnerships with the Kingsdale Neighbourhood Association, House of Friendship and the City of Kitchener. In January of 2022 UNA moved to our new home at 54 Benton Street in downtown Kitchener.

UNA Church is a society within the Free Methodist Church in Canada. The FMCIC is a part of a worldwide movement with historic ties to the abolishment of slavery, early advocacy of women's rights, child labour reform and the establishment of hospitals and schools.

UNA Church is also a partner with Jesus Collective which is a relational network of churches and leaders who believe the time is right to unite, equip, and amplify a movement that creates space for belonging and collaboration among Jesus-centered churches in our post-Christian culture. Jesus Collective wants to give greater voice and visibility to this Jesus-centered movement that God is raising up around the world.

## Our Values

### **Local Orthodoxy:**

We believe that all scripture points us to Jesus, the living word of God. He is our doorway to knowing, understanding, and experiencing God. Jesus has provided the means for all people to experience reunion with God. He is also our model and reveals to us our true humanity. We affirm the central truths of the historic Christian faith. The scriptures are useful and help us live as followers of Jesus in our everyday lives and relationships. We live in the tension of being people who are shaped by our local culture and being reshaped by Jesus. We will continually explore and discover new ways to live out the teachings of Jesus in our local contexts.

### **Wholeness:**

We believe that God is creating a new humanity and is doing this by redeeming us and transforming us through the work of Jesus Christ. We embrace the salvation of Jesus and submit to Jesus as our lifelong leader. This process of transformation is deeply spiritual and impacts every area of our lives. This new life of God is a fully integrated life where our mind, body, soul and emotions find the peace of God.

**Community:**

We believe that God's nature is love. The essence of the Source and Sustainer of the universe is self-giving and self-sacrificing love. Love is relational energy, within and between persons. God invites us to partner with others who are responding to the divine invitation to live in deeper, Jesus centered relationships. The way of Jesus can not be lived alone. We believe that every person is created uniquely and is wonderfully gifted by God. We also recognize that every person is at a different stage in their spiritual formation. Therefore, with Jesus at the centre of our community, we are a group of people who welcome everyone.

**Mission:**

We believe that we are created to live for something larger than ourselves. The mission of God is to redeem and restore all humanity and creation, bringing reconciliation, justice and peace to the world. We believe that "the church" is a community of people committed to following Jesus. The church becomes the active presence of God in our world. Jesus calls his followers to be a compelling force for good, and we believe that we are at our best when we serve and love sacrificially for the cause of others and creation.

**Celebration:**

We believe that God's presence among us will generate a new way of life that is worth living and celebrating. We are a community of people who are allowing the Spirit of God to form within us a greater expression of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and balance.

**Creativity:**

We embrace creativity and flexibility and believe that living this way causes us to be effective and energetic. We believe that God is always creating and recreating and invites us to participate with Him in this work.

## Teams

We would like to introduce you to the people who serve in our church community. Some of our leaders are supported financially to serve and others volunteer their time and energy.

**Staff:**

Evan Garst - Lead Pastor

Noah Loveday - Associate Pastor (UNA Youth, UNA Kids, UNA Communications)

Alex Witmer - Administrator

Judith Lawson - Community Liaison

**Board:**

Jared Taylor - Board Chair

Dana Laity - Treasurer

John Dinner

Michele Garst

# First Steps

## **Vision**

We'll explore who we are as a church, our history and why we gather and serve the way that we do. You will meet some of our leaders and have a chance to ask any of the questions you may have.

## **Connection**

This is an opportunity for us to learn more about who you are. We'd love to hear more about your story, interests, gifts and passions. We will explore how you can best begin to connect into UNA's community life.

## **Leadership**

Join with us to meet UNA's leadership team. You'll hear their stories and discover why they became a part of the UNA community and are contributing to serving and leading at UNA.

## **Partnership**

This is an opportunity to explore a deeper commitment to being involved in our community. You'll discover the connection we have with the Free Methodist Church, our rhythms of life and faith practice, explore more deeply our theology and be invited to consider becoming a partner in the life and ministry of our church community.

# Our Common Practices

Informed by the ancient practices of the Christian church and the Wesleyan tradition, we believe that there are practices that are essential in our spiritual formation, both as individuals and as a community. We long to be a community that recognizes Jesus as our central leader and guide. We want to live lives of sacrificial love and be a community of hope and goodness. These practices provide each person with the opportunity to experience the Grace of God in unique ways that can transform us.

## **Eucharist / Communion**

We participate in the practice of Eucharist / Communion every week in our Sunday Gathering. We also believe that all people are welcome to join in this practice that opens us to God's grace. The only requirement to receive the Lord's Supper is a personal desire to trust Jesus Christ. This desire might be first experienced in your desire to receive the bread and wine.

## **Baptism**

Baptism is a moment of celebration in our community. Each year we invite people to publicly announce their commitment to being a follower of Jesus. Baptism also serves as a good reminder to others of their own baptism and confession of faith.

If you were baptized as an infant and wish to participate in baptism as a way to publicly declare your faith, then you are welcome to do so. Children are welcomed as parents / caregivers see fit.

## **Worship**

On Sunday morning we gather together to worship. Worship at UNA is a communal practice that shapes our identity as Jesus followers and reminds us of the good life that we are living in Jesus Christ. In worship we both express what matters to us and God's Spirit shapes in us what matters to God. Our Sunday worship is not meant to be a presentation but an interactive experience in which we all participate.



### **Prayer**

Prayer is a sacred gift because in this practice human beings meet with God. It is in prayer that we acknowledge and experience the very presence of God. Prayer changes us, inspires us, comforts us, strengthens us and it moves the heart of God.

### **Shared Life**

The way of Jesus leads us into relationships with other people who are different from us but find commonality around Jesus. Jesus gifts each of his followers uniquely to care for and serve in the community. We believe that the shared life in our community is a part of our mission as we bear witness to God's desire to renew all things. This shared life finds its best expression in our Home Groups and Bands.

### **Service**

Serving others is the perfect way to show people the love, mercy and reconciling heart of God. The scriptures reveal a God who has particular concern for those that are marginalized, oppressed and poor. Service is also a practice that is transformative. Jesus has promised to meet us and shape us as we serve others.

# Together

Our community gathers together at different times for different reasons. Each gathering offers unique and important opportunities for those who participate.

### **Sunday Worship Gathering**

In this large gathering we join together to sing, pray, share stories, celebrate the Lord's Supper and study the scriptures.

### **Home Group**

This is a gathering of 6-12 people who are committed to developing a shared life together. This is a place to be known. It's here that we share a meal, talk about the experiences of life and pray together. This is the place where we work out our normal everyday lives under the guidance and direction of Jesus Christ. We encourage every person and family at UNA to participate in a Home Group.

### **Band**

This is a group of 3-5 people committed to meeting together regularly and experiencing a deeper connection to Jesus and each other. Bands are formed by the participants and are usually gender specific.

# Families

Children and teenagers are important members of our church community. We want all the young among us to feel loved, accepted, known and involved. This is why children and young people are included in our worship each Sunday and why we organize specific programs that provide support, care, teaching and friendship.

## **UNA Kids**

Each Sunday after our musical worship, children are invited to participate in creative experiences, games, music, art and story-telling. The kids are encouraged to love God, love other people and enjoy the friends they have at UNA.

Fully staffed classrooms are prepared each Sunday for children Nursery age to Grade 5.

In order to ensure the safety of all children every UNA Kids team member provides a Vulnerable Persons Check to our Ministry Co-ordinator and are trained according to Plan to Protect standards.

There is also a Check-in Table where each child and care provider register each Sunday.

## **UNA Youth**

Every week our teenagers connect to build friendships, have fun, and discover a sense of meaning and purpose in their everyday lives as followers of Jesus. These meetings take place on a weeknight at 54 Benton, and are for all students in Grades 6-12. Youth events are full of awesome games, snacks, and time in God's Word together, as well as small group times for conversation and prayer.

## **Child Dedication / Baptism**

At UNA we invite parents and all those who are a part of our church community to participate in an act of dedication to the children among us. Parents and adults at UNA commit themselves to assist each child in coming to faith in Jesus Christ and following him throughout their lives.

We honour the traditions of the faith and baptize infants as a part of this dedication service at the parents request.

## **Volunteer & Leadership Team**

Providing meaningful care and support to our children and youth requires a large group of committed people. We also believe that our children will feel more seen and loved when many in their church take time to be with them.

We encourage everyone at UNA to offer some time and energy to be with our children and young people by serving on one of these ministry teams.

# Families

## **Local Bread Delivery**

Each week a group of Unites pickup bread donated by Cobs Bread Bakery and deliver it to The House of Friendship and a local community centre from Food Distribution

## **Weekly Food & Supply Distribution**

Each week we have a team of people who walk the downtown core of our city giving away simple meals, hygiene products and clothing to those living on the streets.

## **UNA's Community Fund**

We collectively give to and oversee a fund that provides financial assistance to people in our church community and beyond. This fund has been used to assist with any need among us and has provided assistance for such things as purchasing food, paying for bills and supporting those who can't pay for counseling services.

## **International**

UNA has partnered with a variety of international organizations over the years. Last year we partnered with One4Another. Our church community raised enough money to pay for eight Ugandan children to receive corrective Club Feet treatments and one child who needed life saving colostomy surgery.

# Contribute Financially

God is generous toward all creation and loves it when we reflect His generosity in response. As followers of Jesus we take seriously the invitation in scripture to be generous with our resources. We do not want anyone to feel uncomfortable so we provide a donation box at the back of the room on Sunday and you are free to participate as you choose.

You can also go to [unachurch.org/give](http://unachurch.org/give) to make a one time donation or to set up and manage your own recurring giving profile. Most of our funding comes through this type of automatic donation and it really does help us to budget effectively.

The leadership at UNA takes our responsibility for sound financial stewardship very seriously and a lot of work goes on behind the scenes to accurately track and receipt donations, and to budget and review expenses diligently.

Our budget and quarterly financial reports are published publicly to everyone who is a part of our church community and audited financials are made available at our Annual General Meeting.

Thanks for your ongoing support of UNA.



