

Weddings & Holy Unions

Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto

Your guide to planning a Wedding / Holy Union at the
Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto



April 2006

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Visit us on the web at www.mcctoronto.com



Greetings!

Thank you for inquiring about the possibility of having your upcoming Wedding/Holy Union at the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto (MCC Toronto).

This packet contains an array of information, along with forms that will need to be completed should you choose to engage our staff and facilities. We would ask that you return the completed Wedding Request Form so that we may immediately begin the arrangements for your special day.

*Before having a Wedding/Holy Union at MCC Toronto, you must contact myself, Bill Estey, to review our **Wedding Information Package**. It's important that we address any questions or requests regarding your ceremony prior to you making any further wedding arrangements outside the church (such as receptions).*

MCC Toronto has two certified clergypersons who perform weddings at our church. Both the Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes and Rev. Jo Bell are ordained by the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches - a worldwide denomination. Rev. Hawkes and Bell are authorized to officiate weddings, and do so both at the church, and off-site locations. Their sensitive and accommodating styles go a long way toward ensuring a meaningful and memorable ceremony for you and your guests.

Although providing services of Marriage & Holy Union is very important to us, please know that our facilities are used for many other events and ministries. It is a good idea to plan your wedding well in advance to ensure that the facilities and clergy are available. The Pastors and Staff of MCC Toronto are committed to helping make your special day a joyful and memorable occasion. We will do all that we are able to provide quality and helpful service to you during this process.

Congratulations on your decision to have a Wedding/Holy Union ceremony. Let us be among the first to warmly wish you joy as you take this step in the adventure of your love and commitment to each other.

Blessings!

Bill Estey

Wedding Coordinator

(416) 406-6228 ext 170

weddings@mcctoronto.com



About Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto

Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto is a Joyful, Spiritual
Community of Gay-Positive People Committed to being an
Inclusive, Affirmative, Caring Church



Our Core Values

**Spirituality, Faith, Diversity, Leadership, Advocacy
Caring, Compassion, Courage, Joy, Celebration**

Our Bedrock Beliefs

We believe in a loving and good God, known by many names
God's love is offered to everyone unconditionally
There are many paths to God, one of them is Christianity
God is everywhere, with us always, gives us strength, and works through us
Every person is created in the image of God, and is inherently good
All life is a gift from God, and each life has a purpose
Jesus is our teacher, example, saviour and friend
In the power and effectiveness of prayer
And we believe in eternal life

A Little History...

- ▶ Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto (MCC Toronto) was established on July 17, 1973.
- ▶ Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes became pastor of MCC Toronto in 1977.
- ▶ Rev. Jo Bell joined MCC Toronto as the Director of Congregational Life in January of 2004.
- ▶ MCC Toronto averages nearly 600 people attending our two worship services every Sunday.
- ▶ MCC Toronto has the largest Christmas Eve service in Ontario, if not Canada, attracting almost 2,500 people to Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall for Christmas Eve each year.
- ▶ MCC Toronto members volunteer over 47,000 hours of work each year for our programs and services and tens of thousands more hours for over 50 other community agencies and groups.
- ▶ Each year, through the Bayview Hospice, MCC Toronto's volunteers support more than 90 clients and provides over 14,000 hours of home hospice care to people with life threatening illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis and ALS.
- ▶ For people facing life's challenges, MCC Toronto offers a wide range of programs and support groups. Groups have included: Bereavement Support, Caring for Aging Parents, Relationship Break-up Support, Blue Christmas, Home & Hospital Visitation, TeleCARE, and the Intercessory Prayer Group.
- ▶ MCC Toronto has offered seminars and workshops on spiritual and personal growth including Men's Coming Out, Women's Coming Out, Self-Esteem, Men's & Women's Boundaries, Estate Planning, Legal Issues for Lesbian & Gay people, Health Issues, and Leadership Development to name a few.
- ▶ MCC Toronto is a diverse congregation. A recent survey revealed that:
 - * over 30 ethnic backgrounds are represented
 - * over 20 countries were reported as place of birth
 - * our members represent more than 20 different languages.

For more information on MCC Toronto, please visit our website:

www.mcctoronto.com

“Wedding” vs. “Holy Union”: Choices & Obligations

In a time when partnerships are challenged by many contradicting forces, we feel the need to better the likelihood of your union being a successful one. Because of that, we have established some minimum requirements that need to be fulfilled in advance of MCC Toronto conducting your Wedding/Holy Union Ceremony. Please understand that these obligations are predicated on the desire to be of help. We require them as a way to demonstrate the seriousness with which we enter into the agreement to officiate at your service.

The following options may be available to you:

A) Wedding by Marriage License

Weddings may take place by securing a Marriage License from the Province of Ontario, obtained through City Hall.

It is the responsibility of City Hall to ensure that the couple meets the legal requirements to be married.

Additional conditions are as follows:

- 1) Both parties must be at least 18 years of age.*
- 2) Couples must have lived together for at least 6 months prior to the date of the ceremony.*
- 3) The couple must contact our Wedding Coordinator, Bill Estey, to book a wedding date and review the options available for their ceremony.*

B) Wedding by Publication of Banns

Publication of Banns refers to the tradition of publicly announcing a couple’s intent to marry within the context of Sunday Worship, for three weeks prior to the date of the wedding. For a wedding by Publication of Banns, the following conditions must be met:

- 1) Both parties must be at least 18 years of age*
- 2) Couples must have lived together for at least 6 months prior to the date of the ceremony.*
- 3) Couples must share no blood relation*
- 4) Neither party can have been previously married (either married, divorced or dissolved)*
- 5) The couple must regularly attend the church; “regular attendance” is defined by an attendance of a minimum of one service per month over a period of six months.*
- 6) The couple must contact our Wedding Coordinator, Bill Estey, to book a wedding date and review the options available for their ceremony.*

C) Holy Union

Holy Unions are similar to Weddings, in that the ceremony is very similar (with a few necessary changes) and while it is every bit as symbolic and meaningful as a Wedding, it has no legal significance. The requirements are:

- 1) Both parties must be at least 18 years of age.*
- 2) Couples must have lived together for at least 6 months prior to the date of the ceremony.*
- 3) The couple must contact our Wedding Coordinator, Bill Estey to book a wedding date and the options available for your Ceremony.*
- 4) If either party has been previously married, that union must have ended by an act of dissolution or divorce (documentation required).*

D) Blessing of Relationship

If a couple does not meet the requirements listed above, and/or wishes to have their relationship blessed, they may choose to have a Blessing of Relationship. This consists of the couple meeting with Rev. Hawkes or Rev. Bell, who will pray with the couple requesting God’s blessing on the relationship. This is done privately, in the Pastor’s Study or the Chapel. No certificate is provided. Please contact the Pastor’s Office at 416-406-6228 Ext, 107 to make arrangements.

Notes About the Wedding Ceremony

Please read this information carefully, as it will answer most questions you may have.

- ▶ The Wedding date is not confirmed until the couple has completed and submitted the **request form** and a deposit of 50% is received.
- ▶ There may be other Weddings/Holy Unions the same day as yours. They are spaced so that there will not be any conflicts.
- ▶ Weddings/Holy Unions can be as small or as large as you wish. Two witnesses of legal age are required.
- ▶ **“Wedding/Holy Union Party”**: This can consist of attendants for each person, and can be of any gender. You may have as many as you wish, within reason. These are the people to delegate the responsibility of carrying the rings, paying honorariums, in short, to make sure you have nothing else to think about except enjoying the moment!
- ▶ **Ushers & Greeters**: There people are necessary for guiding guests to their seats, to ensure that they receive an Order of Service, as well as to ensure that any last-minute items that the “Wedding/Holy Union Party” needs can be retrieved.
- ▶ **Sanctuary Assistant**: This person is hired by the church and is required if the Sanctuary is to be used for a full service. This person is responsible for unlocking the doors, setting-up and running the sound system, setting up the altar and assisting the Rev. Bell or Rev. Hawkes with the service.
- ▶ **Flowers and Decorations**: A beautiful addition to any service, they may be delivered to the church and set-up 60 minutes before the service (the doors may be locked before that time). or by arrangement with the our Wedding Coordinator.
- ▶ **Photos**: Are great! Guests may take pictures during the Processional, Signing of the Documents and the Recessional. Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell must meet with the official Photographer/Videographer 30 minutes before the service so that they may direct them about where the best places are to stand, and when are the best moments to take pictures during the service.
- ▶ The couple and all witnesses must attend a preparatory meeting with Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell 15 minutes Prior to the service (this will take place in the Pastor’s Study).
- ▶ **Orders of Service**: are a great keepsake for your guests. MCC Toronto does not offer desk top publishing Services to develop your Order of Service. However you will find an example of the structure of an Order of Service on page six. **NOTE**: We require that you provide your original Order of Service to MCC Toronto for Content review *at least* 2 weeks prior to your wedding date (before it goes to print).
- ▶ Any pre-recorded music which will be played before or during the service must be on CD (no tapes please).
- ▶ Communion (if applicable) is spoken, and not sung.
- ▶ You may choose to have a receiving line at the back of the church following the service to greet your guests.
- ▶ No confetti, bubble makers or rice may be used on church property.
- ▶ For off-site Weddings/Holy Unions, you must provide a small table for Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell to use as the altar, and for the signing of the official documents.

ORDER OF SERVICE

The following is an example of the structure of service used for Weddings/Holy Unions at the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto. The elements are listed in **bold**, with explanation and ideas in *italics*. The format of the service lasts about 40 minutes, but can vary depending on the amount of music you choose to include. There is some flexibility to make certain changes; please contact our wedding coordinator, Bill Estey for details. You may consider having a printed Order of Service, which you may provide to your guests as a keepsake of your special day.

Processional

The famous “walk down the aisle.” Set to music; you may choose to use live or pre-recorded music.

First Reading– Psalm 100

(An ancient song of praise and thanksgiving). You may choose to substitute this reading with another that is meaningful to you. An inspirational reading, a piece of poetry or another scripture may be used; please consult with our wedding coordinator, Bill Estey for suitability. Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell may read this or you may elect to have someone else read. This is a great opportunity to involve a friend or family member in the service.

Welcome to the People / Prayer of Invocation

Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell welcomes the congregation and the couple and sets the stage for the service.

Confession / Assurance of Pardon

Each one is encouraged to confess their pasts and seek God’s forgiveness so that they may be set free to begin their new lives together. (Don’t worry, you aren’t asked to do it out loud – this is just a quiet moment to start fresh.)

Legal Admonition / The Questions

(This occurs only in the Wedding Ceremony)

_____ and _____, you have made it known that you want to be joined in marriage, and no one has shown any valid reason why you may not. If either of you know any lawful impediment why you should not be married you are now to declare it.

_____, will you have _____ to be your spouse? Answer: I will.

_____, will you have _____ to be your spouse? Answer: I will.

The Vows

*The traditional vows are as follows: “First Name, I take you to be my spouse, to laugh with you in joy, to grieve with you in sorrow, to grow with you in love, serving humanity in peace and hope throughout our lives together.” **In addition** to the traditional vows, you may write your own and read/recite them. We do suggest that if you decide to recite the vows from memory, that you also have them on flash-cards nearby. When we get nervous, we sometimes forget things... its natural!*

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

You will each place the ring on the end of the other’s finger, repeat the following words after Rev. Hawkes/Bell and then slide the ring on. The words are as follows: “I give you this ring as a symbol of my promise to live with you in love, honour and trust throughout out lives together.”

Declaration

The “Big Moment” where you’re pronounced married/joined spouse to spouse!

Special Music

This is the perfect place to have a song that’s meaningful for you both. As there is nothing else happening at this point in the service, you can savor the moment together.

Reading of Scripture (1 Corinthians 13)

The “Love” chapter of the Bible, traditionally used at Weddings/Holy Unions. Rev. Bell/Rev. Hawkes can read this passage or you may choose to have someone else read it.

Words of Spiritual Advice

Rev. Bell/Rev. Hawkes words of encouragement... a “mini-sermon”.

Prayer of Consecration / Administration of Communion

This portion of the service is optional. You may choose to have communion for the couple only, the couple and witnesses, or the entire congregation. You may also elect to not include this in the ceremony.

Signing of the Documents

This is done by the couple, witnesses and Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell. There is often a shorter musical piece here.

Prayer of Blessing

A prayer of blessing for the couple

Instructions for the Photographer

The photographer/videographer must meet with Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell 30 minutes prior to the start of the service if pictures or videos are to be taken during the service. The meeting will be brief (typically 5 minutes).

May we suggest:

- ◆ The best vantage point for taking photos of the procession coming down the aisle is at the piano. Wait for the party to emerge from under the balcony for better lighting.
- ◆ During the service, stand to Rev. Bell/Rev Hawkes' left (unless otherwise instructed).
- ◆ You will get a good shot of the exchanging of the rings. During the signing of the register, stand just away from the podium. Instruct the couple and witnesses to look up as they sign.
- ◆ For the recessional, stand in the aisle, 3rd pew from the front. This is also a good angle for "the kiss."



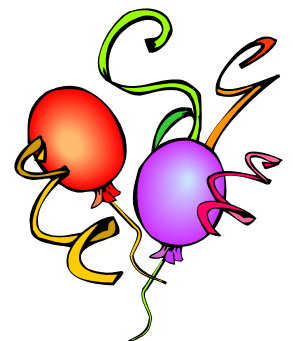
Music

Music is one of the most powerful tools in making the Wedding/Holy Union memorable and meaningful for you and your guests.

- ◆ If you choose to use pre-recorded music you must provide you music on CD. Please do not use tapes.
- ◆ The MCC Toronto pipe organ is an aging and sensitive instrument and therefore, may only be played by one of MCC Toronto's organists. Please contact Bill Estey, our Wedding Coordinator for details.
- ◆ You may use the service of an MCC Toronto pianist or organist, but you need to approach them directly. (MCC Toronto does not arrange music for Weddings). You may also elect to hire a non-MCC Toronto musician (with the exception of the organist, which must be from MCC Toronto). Fees are negotiated directly with the musician, and may vary based on the amount of music and complexity of pieces requested. Having the musician learn new music will likely increase the price.
- ◆ If you hear someone sing during Sunday worship that you'd like to ask to sing at your Wedding/Holy Union, feel free to approach them! Even if they don't sing at Weddings/Holy Unions, they will be flattered by the offer!
- ◆ You may also consider using pre-recorded music (on CD only) during the service, as a more cost-effective option.
- ◆ The main musical pieces are: Prelude, Processional, Optional Piece after the Declaration, During Communion (if applicable), Signing of the Documents, Recessional.
- ◆ Please advise Bill Estey, our Wedding Coordinator re: your technical requirements (i.e. microphones) at least 2 weeks prior to the service.

Receptions at MCC Toronto

- ◆ If you are using the church facilities for your reception, MCC Toronto will hire a Facilities Assistant to ensure security and take care of any unforeseen facilities-related issues. (Note! This is not a cleaning person.)
- ◆ You may use MCC Toronto's tables and chairs but if you'd like specific tables or chairs (i.e. round tables), they may only be rented from **Chair-Man Mills**.
- ◆ Caterers are welcome to set-up in the kitchen. Please note that food may be heated but not cooked.
- ◆ You are responsible for ensuring that the facility is clean and all rooms are returned to their original state. All trash is to be taken to the dumpster outside. Vacuuming and mopping must be done as needed. Most caterers will include this in their package, but please confirm this when you make arrangements. You will be billed an additional cleaning fee if the facility requires cleaning. Please contact Suzanne Christie @ **(416) 406-6228 ext. 103** if you have any questions.



Fees

(Revised April 2006)

Wedding/Holy Union

MCC Toronto Fee: FULL WEDDING ON-SITE \$856.00
SMALL WEDDING ON-SITE \$508.25

OFF-SITE WEDDING \$401.25

Pricing includes the Clergy Fee, Administration Fee and GST.

A deposit is required upon confirmation of wedding / Holy Union date.

Contact: **Bill Estey**
(416) 406-6228 ext 170
weddings@mcctoronto.com

Reception

Social Hall/Kitchen/Room 109: FULL DAY \$850.00
Facilitator Fee, Cleaning Fee and GST included.

Damage Deposit: \$500 refundable damage deposit required if alcohol is to be served.
(A valid LCBO license will be required prior to the event).

Deposit: A 50% deposit is required at time of booking.

Reception Services available: Enquire.

Contact: **Suzanne Christie**
(416) 406-6228 ext 103
schristie@mcctoronto.com

PLEASE NOTE!

All fees are subject to change without notice.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long in advance should I plan my Wedding?

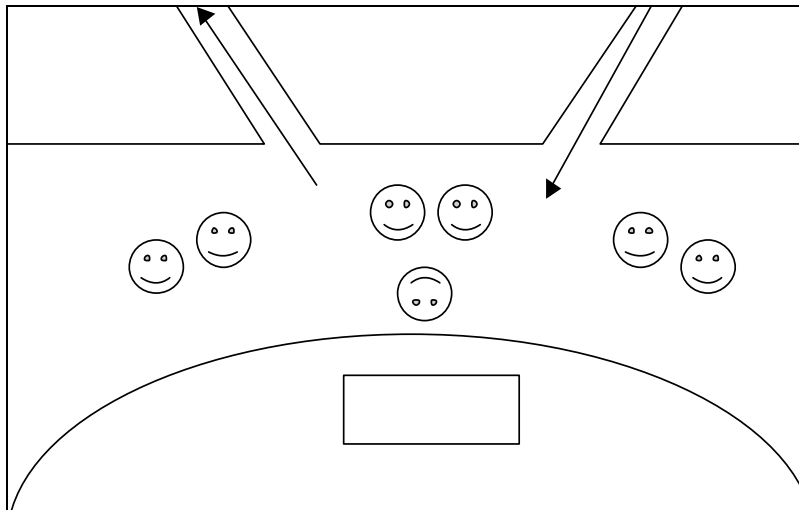
Our suggestion is to begin planning **at least 6 months-1 year** in advance. Many people are surprised to find that the date they were hoping to have their ceremony is not available. Rev. Hawkes/Bells' schedules are such that they may not be available due to other commitments, and frequently there is more than one Wedding/Holy Union in a day (although they are spaced apart so that there is no overlap). **It is not advisable to send invitations or book a reception hall before you have confirmed a date with the church and officiating clergy-person.**

Do I need to have a Wedding/Holy Union Rehearsal?

Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell's schedules do not permit them to attend Wedding/Holy Union rehearsals. Whichever pastor is officiating the ceremony, they will meet with the couple and attendants 15 minutes prior to the ceremony and will guide them through the service. The service is constructed in such a way that it "flows" quite naturally. Most couples find that a rehearsal is unnecessary. Should you have any questions, or wish to see the sanctuary ahead of time, please contact Bill Estey, our Wedding Coordinator.

The Sanctuary at MCC Toronto does not have a centre aisle. How does the Processional/Recessional take place?

While not having a centre aisle poses some unique challenges, the Processional/Recessional is done in such a way that you will be clearly seen by all of your guests. Note the diagram below. The couple and attendants process down the right aisle (see right arrow). They face the altar while Rev. Bell/Rev. Hawkes face the couple & the guests. When the ceremony is over, the couple and attendants walk up the left aisle (see left arrow). We suggest the first pew be left empty, as the space in front of the altar may be crowded.



Do you do off-site Weddings/Holy Unions?

You may be able to arrange to have your ceremony at home, apartment, hotel, garden or alternative location. Off-site weddings are accepted on a case-by-case basis, determined by proximity of location, and whether Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell's schedules permit. Off-site ceremonies are subject to an Off-Site Fee.

My friend is a minister, can they participate in the ceremony?

While only MCC Toronto clergy may officiate at Weddings/Holy Unions at MCCT, other clergy are certainly welcome to assist during the ceremony. Please contact the Bill Estey, our Wedding Coordinator for more information.

How do we change our names?

You may do this by contacting the office of the Registrar General at 1-800-461-2156 or by visiting www.ccr.gov.on.ca

How is parking at MCC Toronto?

Parking around MCC Toronto is very challenging. MCC Toronto has no parking lot, and the street parking is limited and patrolled regularly. Please observe all signs carefully and park at your own risk. Parking exemptions are not provided by MCC Toronto but may be available through the City of Toronto Parking Authority. **We strongly suggest that you ask your guests to allow adequate time to arrive and find parking in the area.**

If we choose to use MCC Toronto's Social Hall for our reception, are smoking and alcohol allowed?

MCC Toronto is a smoke-free environment. Smoking is limited to designated outside areas only. Alcohol is permitted only in the Social Hall, upon obtaining a permit from LCBO.



Important Timelines

This may be a helpful timeline for preparing your Wedding/Holy Union.

As many people are choosing to have formal ceremonies and receptions, it is wise to plan ahead, in order to ensure a smooth process and to be able to find appropriate venues while they are still available.

- 6-12 months prior:** Complete the Wedding/Holy Union Request Form and send to MCC Toronto.
Tentatively set a date with MCC Toronto.
Select/reserve ceremony and reception venues and officiant (Rev. Hawkes or Rev. Bell)
If date requested is available, submit deposit to confirm the date.
- 3-6 months prior:** Book photographer
Book florist
Hire Caterer
Hire Musicians/Disk Jockey
Arrange honeymoon
Arrange attire for ceremony
Set guest list
Select/order invitations (only once date is confirmed!)
- 2-3 months prior:** Address and send invitations (make sure to include an RSVP so you know how many guests to expect).
Secure transportation/limousine rental.
- 2 weeks prior:** Balance of fees are due to MCC Toronto.
All Order of Service information must be finalized and communicated to our wedding coordinator, Bill Estey.

Timeline for the “Big Day”

- 60 minutes prior:** Church doors are unlocked. Florist may deliver flowers, and necessary decorating may take place, musicians may arrive to set-up rehearse.
- 45 minutes prior:** Ushers should be on-site, ready to direct guests to their seats and to hand out the Order of Service (“program”)
- 30 minutes prior:** Wedding/Holy Union party should arrive on-site. This is important as Rev. Bell/Rev. Hawkes will be meeting with the couple and attendants 15 minutes prior to the service for instructions and to answer any questions. Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell must also meet with the Photographer/Videographer if photos are to be taken during the service. Please ensure that the Photographer is aware of this and is on time, as these instructions are critical if there are to be photos of the ceremony.
- 15 minutes prior:** Rev. Hawkes/Rev. Bell meets with the couple and attendants for final instructions and to answer any questions. Please ensure that anyone who is part of the ceremony is present.
- 10 minutes prior:** Take a deep breath, relax, laugh a little! Try to surround yourself with people who will keep you “cool.” 😊
- 5 minutes prior:** Prepare for the processional. Lookout for your “cue” to enter.

Wedding Request Form

This form must be completed before a date can be booked.

Send to: Bill Estey, Wedding Coordinator
Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto
115 Simpson Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4K 1A1
Attn: Weddings & Holy Unions

Personal Information

Date(s) requested: _____ Time: _____

Please select one: Wedding by Marriage Licence Wedding by Publication of Banns Holy Union

(See page 4 to determine which type of service.)

PARTIES TO A MARRIAGE:

A. _____ Gender: M F Age: _____
(LAST) (FIRST) (MIDDLE)

D.O.B. ___/___/___ Name or variation of name to be used in service _____
D M Y

Citizenship _____ Occupation: _____

B. _____ Gender: M F Age: _____
(LAST) (FIRST) (MIDDLE)

D.O.B. ___/___/___ Name or variation of name to be used in service _____
D M Y

Citizenship _____ Occupation: _____

Name to appear on marriage license: A. _____

B. _____

Have either of you been married before?: YES _____ NO _____

ADDRESS INFORMATION:

(STREET ADDRESS)

(CITY)

(PROVINCE)

(POSTAL CODE)

A: TEL: () - *res.* / () - *bus.* / () - *other*

E-Mail: _____

B: TEL: () - *res.* / () - *bus.* / () - *other*

E-Mail: _____

How long have you been in a relationship with each other? _____

How long have you lived together? _____

Have you attended at least 3 worship services at MCC Toronto? _____

Are you regularly involved in the life of MCC Toronto? YES _____ NO _____

How did you hear about MCC Toronto?

Would you like to be added to the Church mailing list? If different mailing address, please include:
