

BAPTISM & MEMBERSHIP CANDIDATES FOR SUNDAY, June 21, 2026

People come to Christianity and Christian faith in many ways. Some are born into families where being a Christian and part of a worshipping community is central. Others, come to Christian faith through circumstances and stirrings at later points in life. For some, there is disillusionment in their existing experience of church or religion. Perhaps it is internal conflict in the community. Perhaps it is an issue of justice, and perhaps it is to escape judgemental and oppressive forms of religion that turn people away in search of alternatives.

Those who come to us for membership through baptism or profession of faith (already baptized) have come to experience at Armour Heights a Christianity that is high on love and high on justice shaped by love as revealed and embodied in the Christ. For some it is about the freedom to embrace faith through the heart rather than through guilt, fear or threat of harm. For some it is also about freedom to be as a woman. For some it is also about freedom to love who you will and choose or not choose to marry who you will. And for all, it is about an encounter with Christ who is the embodiment of a God who is love, a Christ who calls each one of us to become his hands, feet, voice and heart for one another and in our world, and a Christ whose Spirit is active in the world wherever love rises up to overcome fear and hate.

What a gift to witness such faith rising up and flourishing among us helping strengthen our own faith and commitment.



1) Mohammad Behnaz & Barbod

Mohammad was born and raised in Iran in a secular family. This means his family were not strict when it came to religion but allowed family to develop their own beliefs and make their own choices. But in a society where this was frowned upon, he experienced regular criticism and discrimination in school and later in professional working life.

Mohammad met and then married Behnaz who also shared his desire for freedom in matters of religion combined with her desire to flourish as a woman not only as a wife and mother, but professionally as an architect who also established her own engineering company. Like Mohammad, she also faced many challenges.

Together they made a home where Barbod was born and raised to become an independent thinker as well despite social pressures. While in Canada to further her business and career, Behnaz heard that her son Barbod discovered Christianity and then drew in his father Mohammad into such exploration. Together they joined an underground church in Iran. In Christianity they experienced a faith that was personal, of the heart, freely chosen, emphasizing compassion, mercy rather than judgement and equality for all genders. When Behnaz returned to Iran she was also welcomed to join them, which she chose to do.

Of course, none of this was legal, and it only added to their troubles living fully and openly their faith in Iran. Making the big step of leaving everything behind to find freedom here in Canada and hopes for their son Barbod, the family have come. Finding a church community where they experienced all that they began to taste of Christianity in Iran was urgent. Armour Heights has become that home within the body of Christ at this point on their journey. We welcome them.



2) Soha

Soha was born in Iran within a highly traditional family, and she was raised with strict religious requirements from childhood onwards. Even as she fulfilled all her duties under a strong-willed patriarch of a father, she also felt controlled, afraid and anxious. Her achievements in education and other areas were also undervalued because she was a woman. This only increased when Soha went to university. As she began to resist her gender discrimination socially as well as personally in her home, she was harassed, detained and punished by the morality police and her father. None of this was sustainable for Soha, and for the sake of her mental health she travelled to Canada to explore other options.

While in Canada some friends introduced her to Christianity. Here she encountered a very different kind of religion and one that honoured her humanity not only as a free person with a will and a heart of her own that was a divine gift, but also a personal connection with One who was also abused and persecuted by religious authorities in his day (Jesus).

As this was happening, her father also sent word to Soha, demanding she return to marry someone he had chosen for her. Now Soha had to make the final choice of breaking away and making her own life supported by her newfound faith. Discovering Armour Heights church was the next step on her journey and entering the body of Christ through baptism will be a huge mountaintop experience for Soha. We welcome her.



3) Yashar

Yashar, too, was raised in a religiously strict household and throughout his growing years was forced to adhere to religious rules and customs socially and at home. None of this sat well with Yashar but fear kept him from trying to break free. Yashar also had a sister close in age with him and tragically she was killed in an accident with Yashar witnessing it all. Somehow Yashar carried responsibility for this tragedy and the trauma of that loss lived in him throughout his years. A second sister was born and Yashar took her under his wings. At a protest rally outside the university his sister was attacked by police forces along with other students. She immediately called Yashar for help and he ran to find her only to end up under arrest himself, which led to detainment and abuse. This was a final breaking point for him. Yashar fell into a deep depression and a doctor recommended he leave Iran on a trip to Canada.

In the meantime, Yashar had also joined his brother in a successful venture making toy drones. Unfortunately, when a 12-day war broke out between Israel and Iran a few years ago, Yashar, now in Canada, was contacted by Iranian police for investigation and he was pressured to cooperate with them and support them with drone technology for military purposes. Yashar refused and he consulted a lawyer for advice. The advice was to not return to Iran.

Within this time of crisis and distress, Yashar also found fellowship with friends and with Salar and Shiva (already baptized here at Armour Heights). They spoke to him about the inner strength and healing they had found through Christianity, and they encouraged him to come out to Armour Heights one Sunday when he was not working. Yashar came and found among us an intercultural community which welcomed him in love and provided a microcosm of the possibilities of cultural coexistence in freedom here in Canada. He is eager and joyful about the prospect of baptism into the body of Christ.



4) Majid

Majid also grew up in a religiously strict household. As a young boy onwards Majid lived into this faith and even though he would have had some questions in his heart, being a faithful and devoted Muslim as he was taught it was a duty he never shirked.

This all began to change in 2013, when he joined a hiking group and met people who held different perspectives and lifestyles. They were also people who were kind, honest and ethical despite some of them not being religious at all. Majid began to question in his heart whether being a good person required religion altogether.

Majid also began to feel the restrictive and threatening religious environment in Iran more burdensome and troubling. Things seemed to be getting worse in Iran and especially as people and women in particular were becoming abused for questioning and protesting more publicly.

During visits to Canada in 2017 and 2019, Majid was also introduced to Christians and Christianity, and he decided to step into a church one day. The experience was life-altering in the sense that he felt a kindness, a grace and a freedom he had not known before. Was this possible in a religion? Upon exploring Christianity further, Majid came to encounter the figure of Jesus, and beyond it simply being about some historical person, Majid surrendered his heart to Christ and committed himself to becoming a follower of Jesus.

Back in Iran, he had to live this reality in the closet. Only upon deciding to make a final break with his home country for the sake of freedom has Majid been able to come out and embrace his faith publicly. Even as Majid works most Sundays in order to make a living, he loves his connection to Armour Heights and all it represents and offers, despite his journey learning English. We welcome Majid into the body of Christ through baptism.



5) Kathy

Kathy grew up in Toronto and attended a Christian Reformed Church (frequently described as, "Dutch Presbyterian"). She married, had three children and moved to Sutton, Ontario, where the family attended St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Kathy immersed herself in the life of the congregation and participated in the choir and the Tuesday Community Dinners in particular. The family returned to Toronto 10 years ago. The children are now adults and Kathy is single. She is a foot-care nurse and has established her own business. Kathy loves her work primarily with seniors and sees it very much as service rather than for profit. Passing her business card around and dropping it off at Mosaic, she encountered our congregation and met Erin as she says:

"one providential day in late October" (2025). Her first Sunday worshipping with us, she says, "she fell in love with the community and knew she was home." She is deeply grateful for this opportunity to re-enter the body of Christ publicly by profession of faith.