

# **CHURCH PARTNERSHIP AT EASTGATE**



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**If you're reading this booklet it means you've taken the step of finding out more about being a partner at Eastgate. We're so glad you have.**

The body of Christ, the Church, is made up of many different kinds of people. That's His design, and it is all to His glory. Throughout the Bible, from the earliest stories of God intervening in the lives of His people, we see great diversity. God chooses Abraham and his family. God chooses the line of Jacob and then renames him Israel. God works through the children of Israel, freeing them from slavery in the time of Moses. God works in the lives of Rahab and Ruth, through the line of David and then Solomon and so on and so forth until, in Jesus, God makes explicit His plan to bring all the peoples of the earth into His family. Since that day and until the day that Jesus returns, God is demonstrating His love for the whole world in and through churches all over the world.

Our church, Eastgate Christian Centre, is like many others, but we have some distinctives that make becoming a partner at Eastgate a formal process—bringing responsibilities and privileges with it.

We are glad Eastgate is your church and grateful that God has added you to our number. We hope you will take the step of becoming a partner so that we might strengthen you and you might strengthen us: mutual growth and strength.

# Understanding partnership

When the apostle Paul writes to the earliest communities of Christians about what it means to belong to Jesus, he makes it clear that it's impossible to grow in Jesus without also growing in community with others. Being a Christian and being part of a church community are synonymous.

**Romans 12:4-5** “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

**Ephesians 3:6** “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

**Colossians 3:15-17** “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

**BEING A CHRISTIAN AND BEING PART OF A CHURCH COMMUNITY IS SYNONYMOUS.**

## MEMBERSHIP VS PARTNERSHIP?

Most biblical passages that speak of belonging to a church community use the metaphor of a body (the body of Christ) or a family. Many churches like ours use the word ‘member’ to talk about what we describe as becoming a church partner.

Being a ‘member’ can be an unhelpful idea today because we may think about sports or social clubs, work unions or the gym. People are ‘members’ but they don’t always participate. Being a member can give you rights, but it doesn’t necessarily involve being an active part. Being an Eastgate partner is an ongoing, active, two-way commitment.

**CHURCH PARTNERSHIP IS FOR THOSE WHO LOVE JESUS. BELONGING TO HIM MEANS YOU CAN ALSO BELONG HERE.**

We’ve chosen to use the term ‘partner’ because it emphasises that we are committed to living, worshipping, working and growing together.

Being a partner at Eastgate begins in a relationship with Jesus and we express that together by committing to be transformed by our faith in Him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For those who are still exploring their relationship with Jesus, we have lots of opportunities to find out more, to become involved, and to feel at home among us. Everyone is welcome at Eastgate, no matter where they are in the journey.

# Questions of partnership

You don't have to be a partner to participate in or benefit from Eastgate life, but we do invite everyone to fully step into life here as a partner. Becoming an Eastgate partner is like shifting from being a regular guest at a family table to becoming part of the family. So here are some questions to help you consider whether it's the right step for you.

## DO YOU AFFIRM OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH?

Our core beliefs, values, mission and vision are expressed in the church constitution. You can read the full statement of faith on Eastgate's website. That statement of faith affirms:

- The Bible is God's Word—authoritative and life giving.
- God reveals Himself to be one in three persons.
- God created people in His image, but we sin and reject Him.
- God comes in Jesus to save us.
- We can only be saved by grace through faith alone.
- God's Spirit empowers us to live to His glory.
- God's church accomplishes God's plan.
- God's plan will culminate in Jesus coming to judge and to save.

**EASTGATE PARTNERS  
UNRESERVEDLY AFFIRM  
OUR CORE BELIEFS.**

## HAVE YOU BEEN BAPTISED AS A BELIEVER?

We are a Baptist church. We're a church that believes that baptism as a believer is a matter of significant importance and obedience to Jesus. Baptism declares our faith in and union with Jesus in His death and resurrection: we die with Him and rise with Him; now we have eternal life.

The Bible teaches that baptism is the response of people who have repented and turned to Christ. It's not a case of being baptised as a child or adult—it's being baptised as a believer, most often by full-immersion.

It is possible for someone who has a living relationship with Jesus, but who has come from another church tradition to make an application to be a partner but it is the normal pattern for Eastgate partners to have been baptised as believers by full-immersion.

## EASTGATE PARTNERS: ALREADY BAPTISED, ALREADY BELIEVERS.

If you've not yet been baptised as a believer but recognise that this is the next step for you, please talk with one of the pastors to find out more about this step of faith and faithfulness. If you have questions about this, and have come to Eastgate from a different church background have a conversation with one of our pastors.

## ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT OUR VISION AND MISSION?

Each church community has its own identity, culture and focus. We express the core of our vision and mission like this:

**EASTGATE IS CALLED TO GLORIFY GOD AS A LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH—EVERY PERSON, AND ALL OF US TOGETHER—BEING TRANSFORMED IN RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, IMPACTING OUR LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOODS AND BEYOND.**

**KEI TE KARANGATIA A EASTGATE KI TE WHAKAKORORIA I TE ATUA HEI HĀHI WHAREMARAMA—KO TĀTOU KATOĀ, Ā, KO TĒNĀ, KO TĒNĀ O MĀTOU—E WHAKAHOUNGIA ANA E TŌ MĀTOU WHANAUNGATANGA KI A IĪHU, E WHAI PĀNGA ANA KI Ō MĀTOU HAPORI KĀINGA, ME TUA ATU.**

Eastgate partners are people who are committed and excited by our mission and vision.

There is content in each line and phrase that explains what it means for us to be a church and how we prioritise what we do. Partners don't have to express it exactly as we outline here but at the heart of the matter is our sense of joy in each of these areas.

If these ideas do not bring you joy, you'll still always be welcome at Eastgate, but you may yourself frustrated by who we are, what we rejoice in, and where we're headed.

## CALLED BY GOD

Being a church together isn't just our good idea, it's God's great idea. For the last 40 years, we have known God's goodness to us as a church community. We experience life together as God's call on us to be together for the sake of His glory. That's a really significant idea for us because it means that we don't simply want to please ourselves; we first want to please Him, focusing on what gives Him joy.

## A LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH

Lighthouses provide several kinds of service to the communities where they are found. They guide those at sea away from danger and into safe harbour, creating a context where a community works together to provide light to others. Lighthouses serve as a sign of hope in a storm and also as an everyday symbol that gives identity and purpose to their locality. This all helps us as a church find our place in the communities where we find ourselves on a day-to-day basis.

## EVERY PERSON

Young and old, men and women, rich and poor... every person. We are at a church whose doors are open to everyone who will come. We have encountered the transforming, life-changing, life-giving love of God in Jesus. By His love, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and we know that God can and will reach every kind of person. We will make space for every person to be transformed in Jesus' love.

**EASTGATE PARTNERS ARE COMMITTED TO AND EXCITED BY OUR MISSION AND VISION.**

## **TRANSFORMED IN RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS**

As we trust in Jesus, experiencing the love of God our Father in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are changed. It is simply impossible to be a Christian and remain untransformed. As we are changed through the teaching of God's Word, impacting every aspect of our world, we are transformed from the inside out. The God who calls us, loves us, and transforms us, is the God who sends us in His power.

## **LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOODS**

Being transformed by Jesus makes a difference in life, study, play, and work. We are called and enabled to make a difference in all of these places. Through the current ministries and activities of Eastgate, we are seeking to reach, win, build, and send men and women who love Jesus as salt and light into our community. All of the church's connect groups, local activities and our outreach programmes are part of our vision.

## **AND BEYOND: INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

God's plan is to reach the whole world with the good news of Jesus. We participate in that plan by standing with men and women in the places where we don't live. We have a growing number of international partnerships with individuals and organisations who are serving and reaching people with the hope of Jesus. The transformation we experience is the transformation we want to see happening all around the world.

## ARE YOU READY TO BECOME A PARTNER?

What we believe and our response to the church's vision and values qualify people to step into partnership. As we've already noted, partnership is an active commitment—a point of action.

If you trust and know Jesus, affirm our core beliefs as your own, have been baptised as a believer and are excited about Eastgate vision and mission there are some things to consider as you commit to partnership.

## WILL YOU COMMIT TO YOUR OWN SPIRITUAL GROWTH?

*"Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble." 2 Peter 1:10*

God brings spiritual growth as we gather as a church alongside other believers, cultivate regular habits of Bible reading and prayer, and trust Him by living in obedience, generosity, and service. Partners take their growth seriously, committing to these practices as they deepen their faith in Christ.

## ARE YOU WILLING TO SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH OTHERS?

*"Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:5-6*

Not everyone is an evangelist, but every believer in Jesus is charged with the joy of living and speaking for Him. No one is perfect, except for Jesus! Partners take seriously the responsibility to use every opportunity God gives us to point others to Jesus.

## WILL YOU FAITHFULLY USE THE GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN YOU TO STRENGTHEN OUR FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER?

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter 4:10-11*

There's no one else on the face of the earth quite like you. God has designed you with delight so that you might bring Him glory. He has given you gifts and skills that perfectly match His will for your life. Partners of Eastgate look for opportunities to glorify God using the gifts that He has given us by serving in church, in local and international missions, in daily life, and in big moments of working together.



## **WILL YOU WISELY USE THE FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCES GOD TRUSTS TO YOUR STEWARDSHIP?**

*"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."*

*1 Corinthians 16:2*

Legends surrounding highway robbers suggest they would stop people and shout, "Your money or your life?" Jesus might answer "Both please!" Jesus is no highway robber—everything we have comes from Him, even that breath you've just taken, even the ability to read this booklet, every cent in your hands or bank accounts. He has no need of our money, but we have every need to give.

We have a whole resource on financial stewardship. Please do read it (scan the QR code below). But this is much more than about what you do with your money and how much you give to church. Following Jesus is not a matter of money; it's about surrendering our lives to Him. Partners of Eastgate take our responsibility to support the life

and ministry of our church, financially and practically, very seriously; as an act of worship to Jesus.



## **WILL YOU ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN CHURCH LIFE?**

*"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."* Acts 2:46-47

Church is much more of a verb than a noun. It is not a place to go to; church is the people of God. Church isn't an activity that we take part in. Church is who we are together.

People do go to church buildings, attend church services, and take part in church activities, but to belong to a church is a matter of the heart, the head, the hands, and the feet.

You can't be a partner and not be an active part of church. An amputated finger is no longer part of a body, even if it is carried in a glove. At Eastgate partners take our responsibility to participate in life as a matter of importance.

Partners also have the privilege of making the big decisions together in church life, discerning the mind of Christ for us all, making yearly budget decisions, appointing elders, and, when required, appointing the senior pastor. Our constitution says that any partner who is not at least 16 years old at the time of a partners' meeting may not cast a vote during the meeting's discernment process.

## **WILL YOU COMMIT TO BECOME A PARTNER?**

The next step is to fill in the partnership application form and sign the formal partnership agreement, which includes the four key commitments outlined below. The elders consider all applications to become partners.

### **I WILL PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY CHURCH**

In prayer and in faithful attendance I will promote, preserve and protect the God-given unity of Eastgate as my church family:

- I choose to act and speak in love toward other members.
- I refuse to gossip but will build people up with my words.
- I will honour those called and appointed to leadership by praying for them and taking up my part in discerning the way ahead.

### **I WILL DO MY BIT IN THE BUILDING UP OF MY CHURCH**

In faithfulness and with integrity I will care for the whole of my church family:

- I will pray regularly for my church to grow in love and good deeds, that God will add to our number of those who are being saved.
- I will seek opportunities to invite people to attend church services and events.
- I will proactively extend a warm welcome to those around me at church gatherings and open my home as a practice of hospitality.

### **I WILL SERVE THE MINISTRY OF MY CHURCH**

I will seek to honour God in using the gifts, time, talents and resources He has given me:

- I will look to God in identifying ways in which He has gifted me to serve Him within my church family.
- I will commit to take seriously the teaching and encouragement of my pastors and leaders.
- I will encourage the good that I see and seek to build up those around me in their gifts and skills.

### **I WILL SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY OF MY CHURCH**

In belonging to Eastgate I will strengthen our life together with my presence, prayer, financial generosity and diligent attention to our common good:

- I will seek to attend church as a matter of priority over personal convenience—God has called us together as His family and I will order my priorities accordingly.
- I will, with God's grace, live a life that will not compromise the witness of my church—guarding my tongue, avoiding quarrels over needless controversies, loving God's word and being gentle and respectful as I speak with non-believers.
- I will give financially as God commands and enables me to do, according to faith and in sacrificial faithfulness.
- I will participate in Eastgate partner meetings and other appropriate areas in submission to God to discern God's will for our church.

# Partners' commitments to one another

Partnership is a two-way covenant. As a church family, Eastgate partners express the following commitments to one another:

- We are being transformed by Jesus together and so we commit to value you, honour you, serve you, and support you as part of our church whānau.
- We value you for who you are. Your presence, gifts, skills, and contributions are important to us. As a church whānau your joys and sorrows become our own. We will stand with you, celebrate alongside you and mourn with you in the different seasons of life.
- Grounded in the teachings of Scripture, we commit to walking alongside you in your faith journey. We will encourage you to actively participate in the life of our church toward a deepening sense of ownership and belonging.
- We will prioritise your growth in the Lord, providing opportunities through worship, study, fellowship, and service. We will also lovingly encourage you, hold you accountable, and support you in times of struggle.
- We will respect and celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds within our church whānau, enriching our community.
- We will love you in prayer and practical service, equipping you to share the good news of Jesus with others and extending our community beyond the church walls in local initiatives and international partnerships.

If you are ready to become a partner please fill in an application form (one per person).

**Scan the QR code to get started.**

*Note: only those 16 years or older are permitted to vote at church meetings.*



