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The Eastgate Bible Church

INFORMATION HANDBOOK

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE 5

CHAPTER 1 6

 Why the Name ‘Eastgate Bible Church’? 6

 An ‘Eastwards’ Orientation to the Glory of God 6

 An ‘Eastwards’ Orientation to the Written and Incarnate ‘Word’ 9

 An ‘Eastwards’ Orientation in our Vision 11

 An ‘Eastwards’ Orientation in our Values 13

 Eastgate Core Value: Love that is genuine and tangible 16

 Eastgate Core Value: Prayer that is fervent and continual 17

 Eastgate Core Value: Preaching and teaching that is explanatory and holds the Gospel as central 18

 Eastgate Core Value: Worship that is focused on and exalts God 20

 Eastgate Core Value: Discipleship that equips and is Intergenerational 22

 Eastgate Core Value: Generosity in service and stewardship 23

 Eastgate Core Value: Evangelism that is Missional 24

CHAPTER 2 - OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH 28

 Who We Are: 28

 What We Believe: 28

 God – 28

 Revelation – 28

 The creation of Humanity – 29

 The Sinful State of Humanity – 29

 The Plan of God – 29

 The Gospel – 29

 The Person and Work of Christ – 30

 The Justification of Sinners – 30

 The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit – 31

 The Kingdom of God – 31

 God’s New People – 31

 Baptism and the Lord’s Supper – 32

 The Restoration of All Things – 32

CHAPTER 3 - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS 33

 Question 1: Why do you guys go on about doctrine so much (like this handbook)? Doesn’t doctrine just divide?
 33

Question 2: How can doctrine enable true Christian Unity particularly when it seems to have caused so much disagreement in churches? 34

Question 3: Does that mean I can't ask question your beliefs at all? 35

Question 4: What is the 'Eastgate List of Issues' 35

Question 5: How do you resolve issues of disagreement and how can you distinguish issues of first importance? 35

Question 6: How should I proceed when I have a concern about the church?..... 38

Question 7: Can I come to your church if I don't generally agree with your statement of faith or your mission? 39

Question 8: Why have you used the term 'inter-denominational' rather than the standard term 'non-denominational' 39

Question 9: At Eastgate you strongly emphasise doctrinal clarity and yet you practice both paedobaptism (infant baptism) and credobaptism (confessional, believers baptism). Doesn't that mean you are trying to have it both ways and are being a bit hypocritical with the whole doctrinal purity thing? 39

Question 10: Why do you have a constitution? 44

APPENDIX 1 - THE CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF EASTGATE BIBLE CHURCH 45

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Welcome to the Handbook! We're glad that you are taking the time to investigate the background to our faith and practice at Eastgate.

This Handbook was formulated in the early days of Eastgate Bible Church by the initial leadership team. It goes through many of the particulars about the church and reasoning behind why we do what we do and how our identity as a distinct local Church is formulated.

As a body, we have grown and changed over the years. Our leadership has tweaked the church direction in an effort to be obedient to Christ, our formalised ministries have changed name and style, and some of our practices have changed somewhat. But, we are still the same Eastgate at the core. This latest version of the handbook is updated to more accurately reflect who we are, though it is only a minor change from what has gone before.

This is a transitional document. It captures perspectives of a place in time, but God and his people are not stuck there. This means that we are changing and God is working, so this handbook will likely change too as we seek to be more and more conformed to Christ's image, and as God directs us into territory we have not traversed before. As we continue to Know the Word, Live the Word and Proclaim the Word, we want to be progressing ever closer to the goal of being Faithful to the Call, Ready for the Return - for the Glory of the Name!

CHAPTER 1

Why the Name 'Eastgate Bible Church'?

1. When you hear the name 'Eastgate' you may think of a church on the east side of the city (or maybe even a certain motel at the top of the range!). While we did indeed begin in a building on the east side of Toowoomba (a funeral home no less!) the reality is the church was named 'Eastgate' because we were inspired by a 2500 year old bible prophecy. In a truly amazing vision, the exiled prophet Ezekiel is led to the eastern gate of the temple where he sees the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east with a great 'shining' and with the thunderous sound of 'many waters'¹. As we thought about this prophecy and were inspired by the idea of God's 'shining' and 'thunderous' glory filling the whole earth, the name 'Eastgate' seemed to fit. Like true worshippers in the ancient temple of the Old Testament, we at Eastgate Bible Church want the glory of the one true God to be our deepest and most profound calling².

2. We as a church are deeply inspired by Ezekiel's vision of God, in person, re-introducing Himself to His needy creation knowing that this prophetic image, in its ultimate fulfilment³, is actually a vision of God incarnate – Jesus Christ – returning. We are inspired by this vision knowing that God's ultimate glory on earth will mark the beginning of an age more wonderful than anyone can comprehend. Jesus' return will start an age when every tear is wiped away, the earth is freed from all injustice and, best of all, God is seen up close and personal. God, in Jesus, once wounded, then crucified and then resurrected, will be seen as He really is – as the eternal Son. With this in mind our name is really our calling – our calling *to be found faithful at Jesus' return for the glory of His one and only name*.

An 'Eastwards' Orientation to the Glory of God

3. As expressed in our name, our calling at Eastgate is a simple one – to see God glorified. But what does this mean exactly? What it means is that we long to, in a very real sense, see the glory of Christ in God filling the whole earth. We long to see His name hallowed, famous, and respected in our lives – not just as Sunday Christians but as every-day of the week Christ-followers. This means we yearn for Christ's glorious kingdom to come: for His righteous, gracious and just rule to be established over every thought, every mind, every life, every enemy, and eventually every square kilometre. In essence, we long for the name of Jesus to be treasured in our city, our country, and our world. We long for him to be seen as he really is – the hero of the world.

¹ Ezek 43:1, 2

² 1 Ki 8:11, 1 Ch 16:28

³ We believe that while the physical and temporal nature of the Jewish temple has been swallowed up by the spiritual and eternal realities fulfilled in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the OT 'foreshadowing' offers up important lessons for the hope and endurance of our twenty first century church.

4. From the outset we acknowledge this to be a high calling. Our motivation in this must therefore always be the gospel of Jesus Christ because it is in the gospel, through the revelatory power of the Spirit, we find irresistible reasons to love Jesus with all of our hearts and to serve Him. Such a calling, when it is from Him, through Him, for Him and to Him⁴, is therefore not only utterly achievable but also utterly compelling.

5. But what then is the gospel and what does it have to do with God's glory? We get an answer to this question when we consider how Jesus prayed in John 17. We believe that the prayer of Jesus 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you'⁵ was astonishingly, magnificently, and comprehensively fulfilled (i.e. made glorious) by Jesus' sinless life, brutal crucifixion, awesome resurrection, and the wonderful promise of His return. This story of Jesus' life and death and life – this story of 'first importance'⁶ – is known very simply in the bible as 'the gospel' – the 'good news'.

6. Peculiarly enough, Jesus' prayer for glory was not answered, as one might expect, with the glory of a political or social victory, but the staggering 'glory' of a brutal death on a Roman execution device. This ancient torture device, upon which Jesus' perfect life of love and service was brutally ended, became the precondition to His resurrection (and therefore the authentication of His life and teaching) when His corpse – stone-cold dead – rose victorious from the grave on the third day. Jesus thus spectacularly secured His victory over sin and death⁷ *through* the ugliness of the cross and *despite* the vicious confluence of human sinfulness and pride. The prize of this victory – God's justness vindicated and eternal life with Him for the ex-condemned – is now freely available for all that humbly turn to him in repentance and then await, in purifying hope, for His return⁸.

7. We at Eastgate see this gospel, this good news, as truly glorious and therefore worth talking about and living for. It is glorious in the way the root cause of all social and political evil – human sin – is dealt with once and for all by Jesus' substitutionary atonement on the cross. For it is sin and death, and their main protagonist Satan, that together are the great adversaries of mankind⁹. Therefore, in dealing with sin and death as the core problems of humanity, Jesus also dealt with *all* of the world's problems – as will ultimately be seen in the consummation of His return. Thus, we can truly say as the early church fathers did 'Christus Victor!' – 'Christ the Victor' over sin, death, poverty, famine, drought, earthquake, corruption, abuse and every other ugliness or trauma in life. We therefore lovingly, thankfully, and faithfully preach the

⁴ Col 3:17

⁵ Jn 17:1

⁶ 1 Cor 15:3

⁷ attested to by numerous witnesses and an empty tomb 1 Cor 15

⁸ 1 Jn 3:3

⁹ Ro 5:12, Rev 20:10, 14

glory of God in Christ; that is, we preach Christ Incarnate¹⁰, Christ crucified¹¹, Christ resurrected¹² and Christ returning¹³ – we preach the gospel¹⁴. This is because the calling and vision to glorify the Name necessarily involves the calling to preach the glory of the Gospel of Christ¹⁵. It is towards this calling that every ministry of Eastgate is orientated. Thus, when we say we are orientated as a church towards the Glory of God, we are orientated towards *the light of the gospel of the Glory of Christ who is the image of God*¹⁶.

8. While these are the wonderful truths of scripture, they are of no avail to us personally without a faith-response – without lives lived out of, and in response to, the power of these grace-bringing truths¹⁷. This requires dependence on Jesus through His Spirit. To be dependent on Jesus means we *need* Jesus, we are trusting in Jesus and we are honouring Jesus with our lives not just our words. This is a high calling. It is, in fact, a supernatural calling which begins in, is sustained by, and ends in, the power of God himself through the Holy Spirit who Jesus promised would be with us always¹⁸. Such a calling, as with all of God's callings, can therefore only be accepted humbly in faith-dependence on God who, by his own mercy and grace, freely supplies just the faith and grace we need¹⁹. This is because *when we are weak He is strong*²⁰. In this dynamic of dependence upon God, He, rather than our own self-satisfaction, becomes all the more special. We therefore believe God's glory manifests itself in gospel-living Christians who are Christ-dependent in their workplace, learning-place and home-place. God shines in Christians who think Christianly, speak Christianly and act Christianly. We do not believe God gets any glory from Christians who are Christian on Sundays but are indiscernible from everyone else the rest of the week. God, for His own glory, calls Christians to be Christian in a biblically real and immanently practical sense. This means we need Him desperately if we are to be the salt of the earth and a city of light on a hill²¹. We believe that, in dependent faith upon Jesus in the Holy Spirit,²² such a calling is not only possible it is expected.

¹⁰ Jn 1:14

¹¹ 1 Cor 1:23

¹² 1 Cor 15:4

¹³ 1 Th 4:13-18

¹⁴ 1 Cor 15 Insomuch as these events are the culminating expression of God's redemptive plan, as revealed in the bible, they can be referred to collectively as the 'gospel'

¹⁵ 2 Cor 4:6

¹⁶ 2 Cor 4:4

¹⁷ Ro 10:10, Mt 7:24

¹⁸ Jn 14:16, Mt 28:20.

¹⁹ Eph 2:5

²⁰ 2 Cor 12:10

²¹ Mt 5:13, 14

²² 2 Cor 11:30, 2 Cor 12:9, Heb 10:39

9. When we realise how inadequate we are for these tasks, how lost we are within ourselves and then, in faith, how much we need his Spirit, our weaknesses become a pointer to our need for Christ. In this Jesus-dependent dynamic, Christ's kingdom advances as we are changed by His grace and, with us in our little 'worlds', our families change, our cities change and our countries change as we, by faith, live the gospel in ordinary minutes and hours. Christians are those who know *and live* the high calling of the gospel of Jesus by faith in Jesus. Therefore, *we are not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*²³.

An 'Eastwards' Orientation to the Written and Incarnate 'Word'

10. We are Eastgate **Bible** Church because, as placement of the word 'bible' in our name suggests, the bible is central to our spiritual life. It would have been in the eastern and public courtyard of the OT Temple that the people of God gathered to hear and be taught the Word of God²⁴. So too, we as a church, are orientated towards the preaching, teaching, and living out of God's Word. Without the written Word we cannot meet the living, incarnate Word; that is, we cannot meet the living Lord Jesus who is, in one way or another, spoken about in every one of the 66 books of the bible²⁵. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we meet the Lord Jesus in every page of the bible. Therefore, inasmuch as the Bible connects and reconnects us to Jesus, *this Word, this Bible, is to us our very life*²⁶ because it connects us to the life-giver – to the one who, in a clear allusion to the OT passage 'man cannot live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'²⁷, called himself the 'bread of life'.²⁸ As we read (and 'feed' upon) this word of life, the bible encourages us in our love for Christ-in-God, corrects us in our sometimes-distorted perceptions of Christ-in-God, and rebukes us for loveless, faithless and hopeless sinfulness towards Christ-in-God. It is truly our 'life'.

11. The study of the bible both at home and in the church is central to our love for God and we as a church are therefore committed to its centrality in our church life. The centrality of the written word as a means of knowing the living Word – the Lord Jesus – is expressed in our mission statement:

²³ Ro 1:16, 17

²⁴ Neh 8:1

²⁵ Lk 24:27

²⁶ Dt 32:47

²⁷ Dt 8:3, Mk 4:4

²⁸ Jn 6:35

***Know the Word, Live the Word, Proclaim the Word for the Glory
of The Name***

12. The mission statement for Eastgate Bible Church reflects a declaration of a serious commitment to know, live **AND** proclaim the great truths of scripture so that, in the dynamic of Christian knowing, living and proclaiming; God's excellencies and Glory in Christ would be clearly evidenced.

13. There are four critical themes that make up Eastgate's mission statement. Firstly, as made obvious by the paragraph above, we are orientated towards the preaching and teaching of God's Word with relevance and faithfulness. It is worth repeating that without the written Word we cannot meet the living, incarnate Word; that is, we cannot meet Jesus. The use of capitalised 'W' in 'Word' is therefore deliberate and refers to knowing not only the written 'word' but also knowing Jesus the living 'Word'. As mentioned above, we believe that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can meet the Lord Jesus in one form or another in every page of the bible there to be, whatever the case might be, informed, corrected, rebuked and encouraged in our understanding and affections towards Him. To know, live and proclaim the Word is therefore to know, live and proclaim the Lord Jesus²⁹.

14. Secondly, we are very much aware that an emphasis on *knowing* to the detriment of *living* turns a church into a lifeless academic institution. For this reason, we take Jesus' teaching in the parable of the wise and foolish builders³⁰ seriously; that is, those who hear His words and *do them* are wise and anchored to a sure foundation (Him), while those who hear **but do not do** are foolish and quickly swept away. Our mission statement is therefore a declaration of gracious orthodoxy and faithful, loving orthopraxy – the commitment to right knowing *and* right living. We believe that right knowing and right living are two sides of the same spiritual coin. We do not believe Christianity is mere intellectual assent decoupled from real life.

15. The truth of the Word calls for an actualised response: a response that ultimately equates to increasing love for Jesus and for others³¹ and, out of this love, Christlike changes not only in mental understanding but in behaviour and attitude. The bible articulates this using the metaphor of fruit³². We therefore want to be a people that upon knowing the word bear good fruit, fruit that will last. We want to know that year-by-year, through dependence on the Holy Spirit, our lives are becoming more and more like our master the Lord Jesus. We also want as a Church community to encourage each other on in this calling

²⁹ see also the Eastgate values statement

³⁰ Mt 7:24-27

³¹ Lk 10:27

³² Col 1:10,

out of a deep and growing love for each other³³ which is why we hold personal accountability to other members of the church and the practice of church discipline as important (see also the Eastgate Church Discipline Article on our website).

16. Again, it is worth repeating, dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit is especially important here in avoiding self-righteous, works-based Christianity or, alternatively, impotent 'cheap grace' Christianity – both of which are sinful and dishonouring to God. We believe to live the Word is to live in continual dependence upon the Lord Jesus and his indwelling Spirit. We do not want to preach a message that neglects the realities of living in a world stained and damaged by sin – a complex, demanding and often disheartening world. Nor do we want to preach a watered-down message simply because of our own weak faith or the pressures of a secularising society. Rather in knowing *and* living the Word, we want to encounter the exceedingly high standards of God's perfections, his consequent expectations³⁴ of twenty first century humans and their subsequent convergence in the work and person of His precious son. In this way, as our filthy-rag³⁵ righteousness and our apathies are exposed by His infinite holiness and His infinite love in the cross, all of us will be enticed away from futile dependence on dead works and/or cheap grace to our only hope Christ Jesus.

17. Thirdly, it will be this 'boasting', this 'look what the Lord has done' thankfulness overflowing in church life that we believe will most glorify God. Our commitment to a proclamation of the Word in Eastgate's mission is therefore not only a commitment to individual and collective evangelism³⁶ but also a continual commitment to knowing and living the Word of God. Knowing and living the word means the *lives* of Eastgate members should preach a grace-sermon that matches their *words*.

An 'Eastwards' Orientation in our Vision

18. The mission statement of Eastgate Bible Church has, as it's ultimate objective (as a *vision*), the 'Glory of His name'³⁷. To genuinely know, to authentically live and to fervently proclaim the Word is to lift high the name of Jesus and therefore the name of God. This is not a one-off thing but an ongoing cycle in which lives are increasingly changed and the Name is increasingly glorified. As a church we recognise our need for the Word – for Jesus – as an everyday need. The ellipsis (the '...') at the end of the mission statement thus signifies the ongoing nature of our mission. As a church we need to 'know, live, and proclaim the Word' for His glory as an ongoing cycle. Therefore, our intent, in His grace, is for this mission

³³ Heb 10:24

³⁴ being as they are expressions of His character

³⁵ Isa 64:6

³⁶ See also Values Statement

³⁷ There are many ways of conceptualising mission, vision and values. Very simply we see the vision as the goal or the endstate while the mission is the means of attaining that goal. Values are those desirable personal and collective traits that enable the mission.

and vision to become the heart-cry of every Eastgate member. From those called to executive work to those engaged in blue collar employment; from the children of the church to the elderly, from married to single folk, from street ministries to military ministries, from home to work, from church-planting to retail, it is our congregational desire to know, live and proclaim the Word *for the Glory of the Name*.

19. This vision for the glory of the Name is cast in the imperative by biblical promises of Jesus' return. Like the OT temple, we are orientated towards the return of our Lord Jesus in a spiritual sense as the temple was in a physical sense. It is to the east of the OT temple that the angel told Jesus' disciples he would return in the same manner he was about to leave³⁸. The Prophet Zechariah gives a vivid image of this when he describes the Lord Jesus descending upon the earth to the east of the temple and splitting in two the Mount of Olives³⁹.

20. With this evocative image in mind, we are orientated towards the return of the Lord Jesus as our calling and vision, knowing that His return now is nearer than it ever was. Though we do not know the day or the hour it could be before the eyes reading this sentence reach the end of the page. The Bible tells us that *He who is coming will soon come*⁴⁰ and this means that for us as the Eastgate Community there should be a sense of urgency and a sense of expectancy in all that we do. The Bible tells us to redeem time and to number our days very carefully. This means we are to number them as a man numbers a precious commodity because even with a 'full' life (70 or 80 years), our lives are indeed very short – they are in fact, in the context of eternity, just a 'morning mist'⁴¹.

21. To be ready *anytime* (as is expressed in the story of the wise and foolish servants and other kingdom parables⁴²) means to be ready *all* the time. This means our Church vision, our calling, is a calling to faithful readiness. As a church we wish to one day personally and joyfully answer Jesus end-times question 'will I find faith on the earth?'⁴³ with a humble 'yes' and to hear the most precious affirmation of all: 'well done good and faithful servant, enter into your rest'.

22. Our vision is therefore:

Faithful to the Call, Ready for the Return

³⁸ Acts 1:10-11

³⁹ Zech 14:4

⁴⁰ Heb 10:37

⁴¹ Ps 90:12, Jam 4:14

⁴² Mt 25

⁴³ Lk 18:8

– for the Glory of the Name.

An ‘Eastwards’ Orientation in our Values

23. As a part of the calling to be ***faithful and ready*** we have sensed the Spirit’s leading in articulating seven key values for the church. Our values serve as both markers and goals: as characteristics and aspirations.

24. In a very real sense our values, as indicators and aspirations, reflect the ‘now but not yet’ idea of Christ’s Kingdom. We recognise that Christ has inaugurated His Kingdom with the victory of the cross and the resurrection but not yet consummated it with the complete and comprehensive rule of His return - therefore we recognise a ‘now but not yet’ sense to His Kingdom. This also applies in a ‘now but not yet’ sense to the fulfilment of these values in the kingdom rule over *every* area of our lives – thoughts, actions and attitudes as well as jobs, hobbies and other activities. In our values then we recognise that we are certainly not yet, as a church, as loving, as prayerful, as biblically faithful, as worshipful, as intergenerational, as generous, or evangelistic as we should be, but at the same time we recognise that if we truly belong to Jesus then one day *we will be* – gloriously so. The important thing here is an upward vector, an upward trajectory, in the living out of these values. As such they become both indicators of our progress and aspirations of the ‘not yet’ as He calls us to be more fruitful in these areas.

25. Thus our values help us to see our need for Him as we see our need in ‘the now’ for greater love, more fervent prayer, more biblical faithfulness, more profound worship, more intergenerational care, more generosity and more missional zeal – the perfections of which are still to come in the ‘not yet’. What bridges the gap between the now (our insufficiencies) and the not yet (our ultimate perfection later) is the work of Christ through the Spirit. This work manifests itself in lives lived in Godly training⁴⁴, repentance and faithfulness. We have articulated this in our mission as a dynamic of ‘knowing’, ‘living’ and ‘proclaiming’ the Word; that is, knowing, living and proclaiming Jesus. Thus, our values are both ‘aspirational’ and referential. They are the embodiment of what we pray we will become, and they are spotlights on where we are right now. They therefore express our need to grow in Jesus as we know Him better, Live like Him better and Proclaim Him better. The mission, vision, and values of Eastgate therefore underpin the decisions we make, infuse the ministries of the church, and are the embodiment of what we hope to become – all for His glory.

26. Putting the church’s vision, mission, and values together then: our vision is our calling (our objective, our goal). Our mission is the means of fulfilling this calling and our values are the markers by

⁴⁴ 1 Tim 4:7, 8

which we can judge the 'success' of our mission and the markers of thankfulness to God as He fulfils His calling on our lives. As members of Eastgate we want to be found faithful to the call and ready for Jesus' return for the glory of His name (our vision). As members of this church we are committed to knowing, living and proclaiming the Word (our mission) and the characteristics of this mission and calling will be love, prayer, preaching, worship, discipleship, generosity and evangelism (our core values).

27. The values of Eastgate Bible Church plainly stated are as follows:

1. Love that is genuine and tangible
2. Prayer that is fervent and continual
3. Preaching and teaching that is explanatory and centres on the Gospel
4. Corporate Worship that is focused on and exalts God
5. Discipleship that equips and is Inter-generational
6. Generosity in service and stewardship
7. Evangelism that is Missional

28. Thinking through the Eastgate character in this way enables us to put practical details into where we are going as a church. This gives us the direction in which the first steps must be taken. In our vision, values and mission we have our 'marching orders'. With this in mind each value and its theological underpinning (the 'know' of our mission) is expressed below along with a vision (faith goal) for both current and future ministries where these values can be lived out more fully (the 'live' part of our mission).

29. A faith goal, alluded to above, is simply a goal associated with a ministry area that is required for that ministry to flourish and is impossible to achieve without divine intervention which then provides a focus for prayer. The idea of the faith goal is therefore to depend on God – especially in the sustaining and flourishing of the church's ministries.

30. What is worth mentioning at this point is the fact that we at Eastgate see our primary calling being worked out in the workplace, home place and learning-place. Therefore, many of the church ministries exist to support you in your ministry area 'out there'. It would be most detrimental to our mission and vision if we become an insulated, 'centre-wards' organisation tightly wound with various church programs and very little outward focus. Therefore, we acknowledge that many members at Eastgate, while committing to regular worship times, and perhaps one other Church activity each week, will not be primarily concerned with filling positions within the church. Instead, they will be concerned with a heartfelt call to make Jesus famous in

their home, their work and their learning places with the Church assisting them wherever possible to fulfil this call.

31. Nonetheless, there are those who are called and gifted to fulfil specific tasks within Eastgate, tasks articulated in some detail below. Just as it would be sinful to ignore the call to be a missionary in the workplace and a mentor in the home place, it would also be sinful to ignore the gifts of encouragement and up-building given to some members for the equipping of the saints⁴⁵. Moreover, we must never forget God has given us *all* a responsibility to encourage one another onto love and good works⁴⁶. It is wise for us to consider Jesus' words, particularly in a culture of entertainment and amusement, that any service in His name, any following after Jesus in acts of service, will be a slog and require certain pleasures to be painfully sacrificed: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me".⁴⁷ To wisely consider Jesus words is to realise that following him requires us to deny 'stuff' and to take on a burden, His burden. We should wisely consider what burden Jesus wants us to carry at Eastgate and what, timewise in busy schedules, may have to be denied knowing that in it all He is worth it and that 'He who is coming will soon come'.

[May the Lord who gives life to the dead and sees things

"that are not as though they were"⁴⁸ make it so.' Amen.]

⁴⁵ Eph 4:11,12,13

⁴⁶ Heb 10:24

⁴⁷ Mt 16:24

⁴⁸ Rom 4:17

Eastgate Core Value: Love that is genuine and tangible.

'Know'

32. We value love as the sum and foundation of all Scripture⁴⁹. We affirm that the fullest expression of love is the Son of God, Jesus Christ, laying down his life for sinners on the cross⁵⁰. We recognise that we only love in a Godly way because God first loved us⁵¹. Our love then is an expression of God's gracious love to us and in turn enables us to truly love others⁵². We know that if we possess all spiritual gifts, have mountain-moving faith and Wikipedian knowledge... without love – we are nothing, and gain nothing⁵³.

33. We value love as an indispensable mark of the Christian life, and the measure and test of this love to God is the desire for whole-hearted obedience to his Word⁵⁴. The measure and test of this love to our neighbours is laying down our lives for them⁵⁵. We value love that lacks self-concern, seeks our neighbour's good, and is measured by how much it gives to that end. We value love as a principle of action as well as emotion. Deeds of mercy are an expression of compassion for people, both the church and unchurched. We value active love for others as a mark of a true disciple of Jesus and evidence that the Holy Spirit is bringing forth fruit in us⁵⁶ as the evidence of a changed life and witness to a needy world⁵⁷.

'Live and Proclaim' Eastgate Ministries of Love

Vision: *Practical and pastoral (shepherding) love for each other in day-to-day life. This means praying for each other, visiting and being visited for fellowship, practical helps (in house moves, meals, house / lawn care during times of illness), help in sickness, hospital and prison visits, following up those who are irregularly attending in loving and caring ways, and anything else in accord with the leading of the Spirit of God. A church at the return that, if nothing else, is known because 'they really love each other'.*

⁴⁹ Mt 22:35-40

⁵⁰ Jn 10:11, 15, 17; 15:13; Ro 5:8; 1 Jn 3:16

⁵¹ 1 Jn 4:9-10, 19

⁵² Eph 4:32-5:2

⁵³ 1 Co 13:1-3

⁵⁴ Jn 14:15, 21, 23; 1 Jn 5:3

⁵⁵ 1 Jn 3:16

⁵⁶ Gal 5:22

⁵⁷ 1 Pe 2:12

Eastgate Core Value: Prayer that is fervent and continual

'Know'

34. We value prayer because God has spoken to us in and through the contents of the Bible and we then speak to God about Himself, ourselves, and people in His world, shaping what we say as response to what He has said. This two-way conversation is meant to continue as long as life lasts and demonstrates our ongoing dependence on Jesus our Great High Priest. How we think about prayer, and the priority we give to it, reflects the truth of what we think about God and the priority we give Him. Prayer continually carries us back to God, depending on Him to work, save, bless, and to protect. God's great movements in this world have been conditioned on, continued by, and fashioned by prayer. Little prayer leads to limited power. God is all-sufficient to supply our every need for the work of his kingdom⁵⁸, yet we often go without because we do not pray⁵⁹.

35. We value both private prayer as taught by Jesus⁶⁰, and prayer in company with others as modelled by the early church⁶¹. In prayer, we express adoration and praise for who God is; confession of our sins and requests for forgiveness; thanks for God's goodness; and petitions for ourselves, and intercession for others. We value the Psalms as models of corporate and individual prayers. We know that all our prayers are to be made in Jesus' name⁶² because He is our Mediator, the One who secures our access to the Father, and we look to Jesus as our intercessor in the Father's presence. We value a spirit of prayer, both in our personal lives and the life of the church, as the obvious evidence of a genuine work of God and the obvious evidence of a Church dependent on Him.

'Live and Proclaim' Eastgate Ministries of Prayer.

***Vision:** Genuine, authentic prayer in the Spirit. An individual and collective mindset towards prayer as the primary response in trial, victory, and uncertainty. Prayer individually as attitudinal not merely functional i.e. as the practice of the presence of God in everyday living through an attitude of awareness and need. Prayer collectively in church services and home groups. A praying church and a watching church at the return.*

⁵⁸ 2 Co 9:8

⁵⁹ Jas 4:2

⁶⁰ Mat 6:5-13

⁶¹ Ac 1:14; 4:24

⁶² Jn 14:13-14; 15:7, 16; 16:23-24

Eastgate Core Value: Preaching and teaching that is explanatory and holds the Gospel as central

'Know'

36. We value the Word of God as the primary means God has appointed to reveal Himself to human beings in this present world⁶³. At Eastgate Bible Church we seek to preach and teach in a way that explains the Bible, without undue dependence on other books, so that all may know God more fully. We value the Scripture as objective truth⁶⁴ which can be understood, and agree the Bible still speaks with authority and relevance to all peoples and cultures across time. We place the highest priority on "word ministries", including preaching but we also seek to elevate the role of Scripture in small groups, evangelism, counselling, and discipleship⁶⁵.

37. We value a culture of learning where everyone is seeking to know God more fully through His Word. Therefore, the Bible is our standard for what we should think, feel, do, and say. We acknowledge that we can only learn what God wants us to know as we trust in the enabling of the Holy Spirit because He is the one who is both the originator and explainer of the Bible⁶⁶. The Holy Spirit's work is to teach us all things and remind us of everything Jesus has said to us⁶⁷. This work of sanctification is by grace, through faith.

38. We recognise the Word of God must be individually applied to every area of life, and not simply listened to by ears. We must be doers of the Word and not hearers only⁶⁸. When we grow in our knowledge of who God truly is there will inevitably be a response reflected through our actions⁶⁹. This response is what is meant by the fruit of the Holy Spirit⁷⁰. We value the centrality of the gospel in all that we proclaim because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes⁷¹. The message humanity most needs to hear is what Jesus accomplished through His death on the cross. Through the preaching of the gospel the Kingdom of God advances, and captive sinners are set free⁷².

39. We acknowledge historically different emphases and interpretations of the bible as well as the influences of post modernity on biblical hermeneutics. Nonetheless we believe the reformation principle of

⁶³ Jn 1:1; Heb 1:1-4

⁶⁴ Jn 17:17

⁶⁵ See <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/who/>

⁶⁶ 1Co 2:14

⁶⁷ Jn 14:26

⁶⁸ Php 4:9; Heb 4:2; Jas 1:25

⁶⁹ Jas 1:22-23

⁷⁰ Gal 5:22-23

⁷¹ Ro 1:16

⁷² Ro 6:17-18; Rev 1:5

one meaning, many applications, is a sound one and, more importantly, we believe that when we as Christians humbly seek the right interpretation, in dependence upon the illumining power of the Holy Spirit, He is pleased to give us that interpretation so that we can live what we read. We value earnest questions about biblical interpretation at Eastgate and strive to provide a safe place where such questions can be resolved through gracious discussion, prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit as we interpret, understand, and obey together God's precious word.

'Live and Proclaim' Explanatory, Gospel Centred Preaching.

***Vision:** Preaching that introduces and reintroduces people to the excellencies, the specialness, the greatness (i.e. the 'Glory') of God, of Christ incarnated, Christ crucified, Christ resurrected, and Christ returning. Preaching that corrects, rebukes, and encourages with great patience and careful instruction. A safe church where preachers and preaching are gracious, humble, and bold. A church found to have rightly divided the word of truth at the return.*

Eastgate Core Value: Worship that is focused on and exalts God

'Know'

40. We are Eastgate Bible Church because it was through the east gate and in the eastern courtyard that the people, the community of God, gathered to feast, to hear, to sing, to worship. We are orientated towards the 'East' in our worship because it was in the eastern courtyard⁷³ that the Levitical singers led the people in worshipful singing. We love to worship but worship must be in spirit and truth. We believe that a song should preach a sermon or be a response to a Christ-glorifying truth. We believe in the leading of the Spirit in worship. We believe in structured freedom in worship. We believe that if God is not lifted up when our worship is vapid sensationalism.

41. We value the Word of God as the primary means God has appointed to reveal to us how we are to worship Him. At Eastgate Bible Church we seek to promote worship that centres and focuses on our God and Saviour Jesus Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit in and through the people of God. Worship is giving God His worth which is exceedingly great. Worship is that which is owed to God by all of God's creation. Psalm 148 tells us that the angels of heaven, the stars and planets of the universe, all of the physical world, the mountains and trees, the animals in the world, and all peoples of the world praise to God. He is worthy of our praise for He is the Creator of all.

42. Worship is about God and not us. Therefore, our worship of God must focus on God and exalt Him. We can only rightly worship God when we have experienced His mercies in saving us from our sins, death, and Hell. Our response must be one of surrendering all that we are and have to Him for this is "our spiritual act of worship."⁷⁴ We value worship that reveals, as Jonathon Edwards once said, God's diverse excellencies and therefore stirs up our affections for Him. All of life is to be a worship to God which means all activities done for Him are a way of expressing 'worth' of God in day to day living.⁷⁵ This includes the apparently menial tasks such as dishes, nappies, lawn mowing as well as the 'important' tasks of income earning and study. And of course, it also includes the so-called 'sacred' tasks of praying, singing, giving and participating in regular church services. Nonetheless, even with a healthy day to day, minute to minute concept of worship it is important to realise the Bible teaches that those who are the Lord's people set aside focused times for individual, family, and corporate worship of God⁷⁶. Moreover, when this purposeful, regular time of worship occurs, something special happens in the spiritual places⁷⁷ and God promises to be

⁷³ 2 Chr 5:12

⁷⁴ Ro 12:1

⁷⁵ Col 3:23, 1 Cor 10:31

⁷⁶ Ps 100; Heb 10:25

⁷⁷ Heb 10:19-25, Jam 4:8, Mat 18:20, 1 Cor 5:4

with his people in a special way. Thus, when Eastgate Bible Church gathers for corporate worship it is our desire that:

- a. God Himself is the focus of our worship, for it is His Name and His Word that we seek to exalt above all things⁷⁸. In this way our worship times, regardless of style, musical accompaniment, or oratory eloquence would ‘puncture the ceiling’ as we seek to experience the transcendent presence of God.
- b. The preaching be biblical, fervent, God-exalting, and personally helpful⁷⁹.
- c. Our worship experience be “in spirit and in truth” and engages our head, our hearts, and our wills⁸⁰ in joyful expressions.
- d. Both contemporary and traditional styles, the best of the old and the new, are valued in the way in which we express our affections for God.
- e. Those involved in facilitating worship times seek the leading of the Spirit and strive for technical mastery as a pleasing sacrifice and as an encouragement to God’s people.

43. We believe that the family is a microcosm of the church and that family worship in the home is a special thing that leads families closer to God. It is our desire:

- a. Every member of Eastgate learns the joys of personal worship, Bible reading, prayer, and singing⁸¹.
- b. Married couples learn the joy of partnered Bible reading, prayer, and singing⁸².
- c. Families learn the joy of regular Bible reading, prayer, and singing to the Lord⁸³.

‘Live and Proclaim’ God exalting Worship

Vision: *Worship that is a fore-image of Heaven. Satisfaction, pleasure, thankfulness, and joy in the Holy Spirit. True repentance, true ‘changes of mind’ towards God in Christ and a desire and eagerness to see Him uplifted in all that we do. A Church that explodes in joy not in shame at the return.*

⁷⁸ Ps 138:2

⁷⁹ Ac 20:27; 2 Ti 3:16-17

⁸⁰ Jn 4:23

⁸¹ Ps 101:1; Col 3:16

⁸² Eph 5:25-27; 1 Pe 3:7

⁸³ Ps 78:1-7

Eastgate Core Value: Discipleship that equips and is Intergenerational 'Know'

44. We value discipleship as a God-ordained means for the growth in grace of all those who consider themselves followers of Jesus Christ. A key element of the Great Commission was that those who follow Christ must "Go and make disciples." Jesus elaborated on what this means by telling his followers that those who belong to Him must be baptised in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sign of one's being brought into a relationship of grace with our Triune God through the working of the Holy Spirit bringing the individual to repentance of sin and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

45. Jesus also instructed that those who claim to be His followers by the sign of baptism were to be taught to obey all things that He himself had taught and commanded them⁸⁴. This instruction is to be both an equipping work and a multiplying work. This means that Eastgate Bible Church is committed to discipleship that enables the Lord's people to not only *know* His Word, but also to *live* His Word and therefore to *proclaim* His Word with grace hued words *and* lives.

46. We believe the Scriptures teach that this kind of discipleship must be inter-generational. The primary area of ministry for believers is the older to the younger and of course the parental responsibility to their children. Parents are to teach their children in the ways of the Lord⁸⁵. Older men are to teach the younger men⁸⁶. Older women are to teach younger women⁸⁷.

47. Discipleship involves teaching by both precept and example. We believe the essential elements of discipleship includes learning, practicing, and increasing in the following **Distinctives of Discipleship**:

1. Obedience to the lordship of Christ in daily practice.
2. Consistent intake of the Scriptures as a daily habit.
3. Purity and Holiness of life as a firm commitment.
4. Regularity in church attendance and involvement.
5. Consistent Christian fellowship with other believers.

⁸⁴ Matt. 28:19-20

⁸⁵ Dt.6:4-9; Ps.78:1-7; Eph.6:4

⁸⁶ 2 Tim 2:2

⁸⁷ Titus 2:3-5

6. Service to others.
7. Eager learning.
8. Eagerly desiring Spiritual gifts as a means of pursuing love and building up other Christians
9. Bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit visibly.
10. Generous giving
11. Participating in the Great Commission
12. Imitating Jesus Christ.

48. Effective discipleship flows out of relationship. It is our desire to develop rich God-honouring relationships within the church. Eastgate Bible Church will seek to promote this kind of discipleship and atmosphere for relationship through the following ministries:

'Live and Proclaim' Discipleship

***Vision:** Discipleship that values the very old, the very young, and everyone in between. A community where the older teach the younger and the younger share authentically. A community where each follows Jesus in loving obedience, and each encourages the other in following Jesus. A community of faith-full disciples at the return.*

Eastgate Core Value: Generosity in service and stewardship

Know'

49. Eastgate Bible Church is spiritually orientated eastwards because it is eastwards that Jesus determined that he would do his Father's will in the garden of the olive press. It was there that his sweat was like blood, it was there that he resolved he would go to Calvary, to Golgotha. It was there that Jesus held nothing back but gave His all for us with an infinite and startling generosity. We therefore value generous service and stewardship. We value generous and joyful giving⁸⁸.

⁸⁸ 2 Co 9:6-7

50. The God that we worship is by virtue of His very being the God of all grace. Everything that we have from Him is a gracious gift to us⁸⁹. If we are to be a godly people then we like our God, should be *gracious* in our giving. Grace is undeserved favour.

51. Our giving should never be seen as a payment to God or to His Church, or to others. We should give willingly and freely as does our God⁹⁰. We should give as we have decided in our heart to give. The source of our giving is not our purse, but our heart. We are not to give reluctantly or under compulsion⁹¹ which is which is one reason we do not 'pass the bag' at Eastgate but rather have a box at the entrance. If we are to be a godly people then we like our God, should be *generous* in our giving⁹² because God gives us everything including the giving of His only Son. Jesus himself teaches us to be prepared to give our all⁹³. Jesus commended the widow who gave her all. God's promise is that those who "sow generously will also reap generously"⁹⁴.

52. If we are to be a godly people, then we like our God should be *purposeful and proportional* in our giving. All that God does is according to His purpose and plan. He likewise tells us that we should give purposefully, "each man should give as he has decided [considered attentively] in his heart to give⁹⁵". We should therefore give prayerfully, purposefully, and proportionally⁹⁶ in obedience to the Holy Spirit. We are to give of our resources in the form of money, service, and in the use of our spiritual gifts to the Lord's work and kingdom.

Live and Proclaim... Generosity of Heart

Vision: *Generosity that regularly blows the socks off people. Generosity collectively and individually of time, effort, and money. A people found giving extravagantly at the return.*

Eastgate Core Value: Evangelism that is Missional.

'Know'

53. We, as a body of Christians trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, are called Eastgate Bible Church because, like the OT temple, we are orientated outwards towards a dying world that needs living water.

⁸⁹ Jas 1:17

⁹⁰ 2 Co 9:8

⁹¹ 2 Co 9:7

⁹² Ro 8:32

⁹³ Ro 12:1-2

⁹⁴ 2 Co 9:6

⁹⁵ 2 Co 9:7

⁹⁶ 1 Co 16:2

Eastgate Bible Church is spiritually orientated eastwards because it is eastwards that the waters flowed in another of Ezekiel's many visions:

Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east)⁹⁷.

54. As water is many times used to symbolise the person and work of the third person of the trinity so too here water symbolises the work of the Holy Spirit. We long to be a Spirit led church. We believe that as the waters of the temple started small and ended up big, we likewise must each be faithful with small things in order to be involved with big things.

55. God's kingdom is cumulative. Each thought won, each moment won, and each life won cumulatively advances His Kingdom. As the waters advanced irresistibly in Ezekiel's vision so too God's kingdom will inexorably advance. We freely acknowledge that if God does not, in his grace, use this Church he will use another. But, having said that, we are desperate to be a part of the out-flowing work of His spirit and His kingdom.

56. In order to do that we must each be faithful with what we have been given. We must be faithful with little streams so that mighty rivers might flow. We must flow with his Spirit because we can do nothing except 'flow' with him as he moves – apart from Him we can do nothing⁹⁸. At the same time, we recognise that *in him* 'we can do all things'⁹⁹. We believe that as the waters of the temple flowed into the dead sea and brought it to life so to we, as the NT church filled with springs and rivers of living water¹⁰⁰ bring life to a dead world. We are not an insular church, we are a church being poured out into the world to bring life. As Hebrew Poetry tell us:

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.¹⁰¹

57. We see collective evangelism and individual witness as the primary means by which life comes to people and therefore the primary way by which the kingdom progresses. We desire earnestly that each member of Eastgate ~~to~~ be 'naturally' missional. Life comes through our lives when our whole lives are a sermon, and our lives are only a sermon when we are abiding in Jesus.

⁹⁷ Ezek 47:1

⁹⁸ Jn 15:5

⁹⁹ Ph 4:13

¹⁰⁰ (Jn 4:10, 7:37 - another picture of the indwelling Holy Spirit),

¹⁰¹ Ps 84: 5-7

58. It may surprise some to hear that we believe that one of the chief aims of evangelism and missions is not only salvation, but also to see the name of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – glorified. All outreach is done to see God glorified and feared and so that He would receive the praise and adoration that He alone deserves¹⁰². We believe that to love God is to obey His commandments¹⁰³, and as all four gospels contain a commission to preach the gospel¹⁰⁴, all Christians out of love should spread the good news of Jesus Christ, in one form or another.

59. We believe that we are called to love our neighbour as ourselves¹⁰⁵ and that in light of the imminent return and judgement of Jesus, we are to warn them of this event¹⁰⁶. To never speak of this is unloving to the extreme. We believe that as we submit ourselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ and are obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit, Christ will make us fishers of men¹⁰⁷. We are also to pray for boldness in proclaiming the gospel¹⁰⁸, that through us as a church the Word of the Lord may run swiftly¹⁰⁹. We are also to pray that God would raise up labourers for the harvest.¹¹⁰ We believe that to be the salt and the light of the world the word of God must be proclaimed to the lost as well as lived in front of them so that they may hear, and then believe in it¹¹¹.

60. We believe that it is the role of the local church to send and support missionaries to all areas of the globe¹¹², both locally and abroad¹¹³. To this end Eastgate Bible Church will be a church-*planting* church locally as well as a church-*assisting* church nationally and internationally. This is because we believe that it is through the local church that God primarily achieves his kingdom building purposes¹¹⁴. This means building up the local church of Eastgate as it stands in a way which sees maturity in our local membership so that foundationally this can then be the impetus for new churches locally. As a part of this call, we also have a heart to support rural churches wherever we can through training, teaching, worship and/or fellowship.

¹⁰² 1Cor 10:31

¹⁰³ 1John 5:2

¹⁰⁴ Matt 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-20, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:21

¹⁰⁵ Mark 12:31

¹⁰⁶ 2Tim 4:1-2

¹⁰⁷ Matt 4:19

¹⁰⁸ Eph 6:19

¹⁰⁹ 2Thes 3:1

¹¹⁰ Matt 9:37-38

¹¹¹ Rom 10:14, 17

¹¹² Rom 10:15

¹¹³ Acts 1:8

¹¹⁴ Mt 16:18, Ac 9:31, Ac 15:41, 2 Cor 8:23

Live and Proclaim... Missional Evangelism

Vision: *Evangelism that makes mini-ministers of us all – in word, attitude, and deed. A people found with the gospel on their lips as well as in their hearts at the return.*

CHAPTER 2 - OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH

'...for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.' Ps 138:2

Who We Are:

We are an evangelical, reformed, inter-denominational congregation, declaring the whole counsel of God, as expressed through the following Statement of Faith. Our highest motivation is to glorify and honour Jesus Christ through following Him and declaring to the world His majesty.

What We Believe:¹¹⁵

God –

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.

Revelation –

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

¹¹⁵ Adapted with kind permission from the Gospel Coalition Council (<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>)

The creation of Humanity –

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

The Sinful State of Humanity –

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God's own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.

The Plan of God –

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.

The Gospel –

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God's very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is Christological, centring

on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is "Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised"). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).

The Person and Work of Christ –

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he cancelled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

The Justification of Sinners –

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit –

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the “other” Paraclete, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, baptizing them into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit’s agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God’s family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Kingdom of God –

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honour of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God’s kingdom, we are to love our neighbours as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God’s sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan’s dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that dark kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

God’s New People –

We believe that God’s new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each “local church” is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members’ love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His

purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbours, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper –

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously: God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.

The Restoration of All Things –

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his inexpressible holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

CHAPTER 3 - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question 1: Why do you guys go on about doctrine so much (like this handbook)? Doesn't doctrine just divide?

It seems that Doctrinal Statements in modern churches are as prevalent as they are ignored so why would we want to have yet another statement of faith and another mission statement apparently doomed to disregard? For us as the Eastgate church body, the doctrinal truths of this faith handbook are not dead orthodoxy. They are not dry words fated to dust-gathering in an obscure corner of the church office. On the contrary, inasmuch as this handbook (and the 'doctrine' herein) reflects the truths of scripture and its relevance to us as a church, it is no 'empty word' but is in fact our 'very life'¹¹⁶. As John Calvin has said:

The doctrine which regulates the due worship of God, and points out the ground on which the consciences of men must rest their hope of salvation, is the soul which animates the body, renders it lively and active, and, in short, makes it not to be a dead and useless carcass.¹¹⁷

With regard to doctrine, we recognise that the statements written here are by fallible humans but we also recognise the doctrinal truth of God's revealed, infallible Word that this statement espouses. It is to this scriptural truth we declare our whole-hearted commitment. We do not, after all, want to be a 'dead and useless carcass'.

We consider the scriptural truths that inhere these doctrinal assertions absolute in the sense that they do not depend on anything else for their veracity except the authority of God himself. Thus they constitute true Christian orthodoxy¹¹⁸ and form the foundation for right understanding of God. They also form the basis for true Christian unity (see below).

What is at stake in getting doctrinal understanding right at Eastgate is not a loss of abstract theologising but a 'right, true and straight'¹¹⁹ comprehension of God, His nature, His redemptive work through Jesus (the Gospel), His opinion of humankind, His expectations of humankind and His promises of future glory and/or damnation. To ignore, disbelieve or disobey scriptural truth is to ignore, disbelieve and disobey God himself. This is, in effect, to put one's own 'spiritual' opinion above the gracious revelation of God in His word. When scriptural truth in the form of biblical doctrine is ignored, distorted or mishandled the God of the Bible becomes a god of our own making and, as the scripture clearly teaches, a god of human origin is

¹¹⁶ Dt 32:47.

¹¹⁷ 'The Necessity of Reforming the Church'

¹¹⁸ We use 'orthodoxy' to mean 'right and true doctrine' taken from the greek 'orthos' meaning 'right, 'true', 'straight' and 'doxy' meaning 'doctrine'

¹¹⁹ The denotative meaning of 'ortho'

no god at all but rather an idol. We at Eastgate do not want to be idol-worshippers because of doctrinal carelessness or ignorance.

Therefore, we at Eastgate Bible church unequivocally emphasise biblical doctrine because to do so is to emphasise perceptions that are grounded in reality. In a world where ideologies are as profuse as they are vapid, to emphasise perceiving as the Bible perceives is to emphasise reality. As we read the Bible and understand it we understand the true nature of the reality of God and our state before him. As we read the Bible and understand it we begin to hate the things that God hates and to love the things that God loves. Essentially, in our human finitude, as we grow in biblical knowledge we grow to see things as God sees things. This is of utmost importance because the way God sees things is the way things really are. With this in mind we now articulate some key doctrinal statements relating to Eastgate Bible Church. We are extremely grateful to the Gospel Coalition for the section 'What We Believe' which forms the bulk of this document.

Question 2: How can doctrine enable true Christian Unity particularly when it seems to have caused so much disagreement in churches?

Because true biblical doctrine espouses reality and thus forms the foundation of right thinking so too the absolutes (that is, the essentials) of biblical doctrine form the foundation for true Christian unity. This is a foundation upon which true historical Christian unity has been built and through which contemporary Christian unity can be sustained. (see also FAQ 'How can things of 'first importance' be distinguished from those of lesser importance"). It is these truths which connect us with genuine Christians past and present. It is also these truths which we care-take for future Christians - we guard for our children and their children after them, (see also Eastgate Core Value: Discipleship that is Intergenerational) Contrary to popular belief all faith-views do not lead to God nor are all views equally valid when validity is a measurement of conformity to reality. In like manner all groups purporting to be 'Christian' are only biblically Christian insomuch as they conform to a biblical view on Christianity.

The statement of this handbook seeks to articulate the essentials of Christian belief through which we are united with Christians from diverse ethnicities, societies, cultures, generations and denominations. As one preacher has put it, these are the biblical truths we intend to hold on to tightly and if necessary, die for¹²⁰. While the application and cultural expression of these truths may be different the substance of them never will because the reality they espouse is intrinsically linked to the triune God who is immutable and does not change like shifting shadows¹²¹. Additionally, we recognise that there are things in Scripture that are not necessarily absolute but are matters of conviction and where such a 'disputable'¹²² matter is clearly taught

¹²⁰ Mark Driscoll, Mars Hill Church Seattle.

¹²¹ Jam 1:17

¹²² Ro 14:1 NIV

we believe in grace and freedom for believers to express their convictions within the bounds of brotherly love and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The reformation principle on unity is appropriate here as a summary statement:

‘In essentials unity, in non-essentials freedom, in all things love’.

Once again though, the basis for such ‘unity, freedom and love’ is true biblical doctrine – doctrine rightly understood and rightly lived as we seek Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why we are so keen at Eastgate to not only *know* the Word but to *live* it as well (see the Eastgate Mission Statement above).

Question 3: Does that mean I can’t ask question your beliefs at all?

No. As expressed above if there really is a conformity to reality and a genuine authenticity to our beliefs then such questions, rightly asked with a genuine desire for truth, will only show that reality more clearly. Only false beliefs, like false money, have a fear of being shown to be inauthentic when subjected to testing. At Eastgate we work hard to provide a safe place where such questions, with commensurate respect for each other, can be discussed as a means of us all knowing and loving Jesus better through knowing his Word. (see also Eastgate Core Value: Preaching and Teaching that is explanatory and centred on the gospel).

Question 4: What is the ‘Eastgate List of Issues’

In recognition of the fact that we are an eclectic bunch at Eastgate, with a wide history in denominations, we acknowledge that there can sometimes be disagreement about certain matters. The list we keep is a catalogue of issues of disagreement that arise in the church from time to time. Whenever such issues arise our basic belief is that the Lord would have us work towards unity on these issues. We are aware however, that such ‘work’ often requires much time and effort in the scriptures, in prayer and in discussions (see below) - time which is not always immediately available. We therefore have a list which, in due time, we attempt to resolve. This in the future will be loaded on the website.

Question 5: How do you resolve issues of disagreement and how can you distinguish issues of first importance?

We have thought long and hard about how Christians are to resolve disagreement given the clear admonitions by Paul to work hard for unity in Jesus and the ‘new’ commandment of Jesus to love one another as He and the Father love¹²³. Interestingly unity is seen in the Ephesians passages as a sign of maturity therefore we see the resolution of disagreement as an indicator that we are maturing as a Christian community. The only immature thing about disagreement is not disagreement itself but whether such disagreement is subjected to resolution.

¹²³ John 15:12, Eph 4:1-13

Too often disagreement in Christian circles is handled by ignoring such disagreement, sidelining those that have genuine concerns and/or deferring to clichéd statements about ‘not being divisive’ even though the division may be occurring because of false doctrine. When disagreement, poorly handled, deteriorates into car-park gossip, unloving confrontation (or no confrontation at all), a leadership vector away from the Biblical gospel or even just plain old vitriol it is often the church as a whole and the name of Jesus that looks bad.

This is appalling when one considers that Jesus himself said that the kingdom mark of true believers would be love for each other: ‘by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another’¹²⁴. Thus, when we argue unlovingly as Christians, we not only hurt each other and make the church look bad but we sinfully disobey Jesus ‘new’ commandment to love each other.

Of course we recognise, as probably all married couples would, that love is often hard work requiring humility and, many times, repentance. Nonetheless we believe God wants us to work towards harmony and to do so depending upon His Spirit. We also believe that there is a Christian, Godly way to disagree and an ungodly way to disagree. We have put together a paper available on the website called ‘Sanctification by Disagreement’ which details the principles behind Godly disagreement and is essentially the theology behind the way we are to argue – a theology of disagreement. In outline the basic principles of resolution that we adhere to at Eastgate are as follows:

- It’s all about the love. Not ‘Home and Away’ love but biblical, Golgotha love (see the Eastgate Love value). In any disagreement we must never forget our chief aim is to love and know Jesus better and to love each other better¹²⁵. Every bit of knowledge and every conviction must ‘hang’ off these motivations just as Jesus said every prophecy and every law ‘hangs’ of love in Matthew 22. Motivations are many in an argument and often times distorted by pride.
- God opposes the proud. We must all be humble because inasmuch as the Spirit of Jesus dwells in believers of all intellectual and social types the Spirit may speak through them to us. We therefore need to be humble with each other and submit to the Spirit of Jesus in each other. Even the reformers recognised the need for humility in disagreement. As a matter of fact John Calvin stated that Christians were disagreed on non-essentials especially to *keep* them humble and reliant upon the Spirit of God.

¹²⁴ Jn 12:35

¹²⁵ Mt 22:37 - 40

- Spiritual Truths are discerned by Spiritual People. In Corinthians Paul tells us that it is only by the Spirit we can understand truth. He is the one who inspired the bible and He is the one who brings understanding. We should therefore spend much time in prayerful dependence upon the Spirit of God especially when there is disagreement. The real battle is often fought on our knees. Not only in bringing understanding but also in dealing with sin and pride issues that disagreement often brings out.
- Has the bible spoken? The first port of call in issues of disagreement must be the 'instruction manual'. Many times our convictions are not the result of biblical exposition but rather the accumulation of traditions, assumptions and sometimes even false teaching. A simple test here is to ask oneself whether the conviction they are feeling is one derived from a biblical verse, passage or theme. If not it may be that the conviction is one based on something other than the bible. We therefore do not enter into any substantive discussion until all parties have had time to collate a biblical argument. This of course, as indicated above, must be done with a constant 'plank-check' of our own motivations and with prayerful reliance on the Holy Spirit. Once this is done we arrange a meeting to discuss the differences if they still exist as a means of ratifying each other's understanding and being able to correct, in ourselves and others, faulty or partial understandings.
- Unity of Practice. If after prayer, study and humble discussions there is still disagreement the next issues is one of practice. Does the issue result in markedly different practices and if so how can we accommodate both without detracting in any way from the doctrine of biblical authority. This is where the issue of 'first importance' and secondary importance also comes into sway. If the issue is one which does not affect church practice, such as perhaps is the case with eschatological (end times) issues, then personal conviction is encouraged so long as it is exercised with grace and love for others of different convictions. Unity, has expressed above in the Christian Unity question, is unity in things of first importance – the person and Gospel of God in Jesus (see Christian Unity question above).
- Issues of First importance. There are many reasons why disagreement might be an issue. Many times such disagreement, perhaps in the preaching or community group study, can simply be 'let through to the keeper'. Other times it should be challenged. But how to know when? As alluded to above, we believe there are issues of first importance which must be taken seriously while there are other issues of secondary importance which can be left in the 'agree to disagree' basket. Some guidelines in deciding whether an issue is worth challenging are as follows:

- How close is the issue the gospel? In 1 Cor 15 Paul states that the gospel is of first importance. Therefore anything distorting, denying or otherwise substantially affecting the story of Jesus should be challenged.
- How much of the issue is biblically based and how much is based on tradition, church practice or personal preference. There are many ways in which personal convictions are cemented – not necessarily biblical or Spiritual ways. Is this an issue because you believe from the bible it to be an issue or from something else i.e. have you got a verse?
- If an issue is raised where's the love? Jesus tells us that every law 'hangs' on love for God and love for each other. An important indicator of where the issue-raising is going is to ask 'how will this improve my love for God and love for the other?' In other words, 'is love my motivation', is God's reputation or my reputation at stake?

No church will have perfect agreement on every issue, no real church anyway. Nonetheless, just as various types of people (the outcasts of the day) went to King David in the desert with their various beliefs, baggage and hurts and 'were all united under one King' we too want to be united under our King and committed to his cause. Issues that do not distort this understanding; that is, do not distort the gospel, should not therefore cause division especially when we consider Jesus is sanctifying our understanding as well as our behaviours. Therefore we can trust that so long as we are all united under King Jesus we will all one day 'attain to the unity of the faith and of *the knowledge* of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'¹²⁶

Question 6: How should I proceed when I have a concern about the church?

Please consider everything above and if you still believe there to be a cause here worthy of attention please do not keep such a concern to yourself. It could well be that the Lord is showing you something we as leaders or congregants cannot see ourselves. Some helpful steps at this point might be:

- Consider the principles of Godly disagreement above: love, humility, Spirit seeking, Biblically referencing, consequences in practice and first importance considerations.
- If an individual is concerned, such as during preaching or CG leading or anything else, approach that person first.

¹²⁶ Eph 4:13. Emphasis ours

- If warranted approach the leadership. Mode here is important but we are happy with face to face contact, email or letter.

Question 7: Can I come to your church if I don't generally agree with your statement of faith or your mission?

Absolutely. Everyone is welcome to attend our church service so long as there is mutual respect for each others beliefs. However, insomuch as there is significant disagreement with the doctrinal statements contained here, there cannot be true unity as Christians and therefore formal membership will not be available to those who cannot agree with the statement of faith. Additionally it would not be wise to seek membership if there is fundamental disagreement with Eastgate's mission, vision and values as these will underpin all of the church's ministries. Having said this we welcome the opportunity to discuss issues of doctrinal disagreement or even disagreement about the church's mission for the purposes of edification and growth so long as it can be done graciously.

Question 8: Why have you used the term 'inter-denominational' rather than the standard term 'non-denominational'.

We welcome and encourage those who agree with our statement of faith to worship with us as included fellow believers, we recognise the convictions of other denominations and seek to agree on the essentials and permit freedom in the non-essentials. The Macquarie Essential Dictionary provides guidance on the selection of the term 'inter-denominational': inter- a prefix meaning 'between', 'among', 'mutually', 'reciprocally', 'together' which sums up nicely an answer to this question.

Question 9: At Eastgate you strongly emphasise doctrinal clarity and yet you practice both paedobaptism (infant baptism) and credobaptism (confessional, believers baptism). Doesn't that mean you are trying to have it both ways and are being a bit hypocritical with the whole doctrinal purity thing?

We acknowledge that it is a little strange for a church to practice both types of baptism. However it is important to realise to note what are saying and what we are not saying by practicing both forms of baptism.

Firstly what we are saying:

- The sacrament of baptism is important and taught many times in the scriptures.
- The sign (the ceremony, the ritual itself) does not save or make one righteous before God, only faith in the work and person of Jesus Christ does that.
- That there is disagreement and that fault with the disagreement lies in us not the Holy Scriptures.

- That the mode and time of the baptismal sign, while an important issue, is not important enough for the church to divide over.
- There are so many other areas of agreement at Eastgate, particularly in areas of what Paul called 'first importance' (see the handbook for further details), that there are greater Kingdom advantages to staying together and practicing both than there are in dividing.

We are NOT saying:

- 'Unity at any cost' and that the issue is one we have solved by adopting some sort of unbiblical middle ground; that is, somehow accepting the bible teaches both - we are all agreed it does not.

Instead we acknowledge that one or the other of the parties is wrong in their interpretation and that this error is not important enough at this time to divide over.

Furthermore, we are acknowledging our own weaknesses in not being able to arrive at a unified position and we are saying the error lies in us not the scriptures - the scriptures which contain the words of life. With this in mind we ARE saying that, in terms of church purity, the wrongness on one side or the other is a pimple compared to some of the cancers that are prevalent in modern church life and that we are better able to deal with these cancers together than apart.

We are therefore saying, in summary, that though at least one of the parties are wrong we are together depending on the grace of God in Christ alone to save us from this error we have now accepted together as a church.

Furthermore we are praying that together, in humble need of His ongoing grace, the Lord Jesus will be pleased to advance His kingdom using Eastgate Bible Church - in spite of our disagreement and our error.

'10 agreements about Baptismal Disagreement at Eastgate'

1. **We all agree Baptism is a sacrament / ordinance** and should be practiced out of obedience to Christ's command.

2. **We all agree that the sign, the ceremony, the practice of Baptism, does not, in and of itself, bring salvation.** Salvation, as for the thief on the cross, is by trusting Jesus by grace alone through faith alone.

(Note* Paedobaptists at Eastgate believe that baptism, in the form of the sign of sprinkling water upon a baby of believing parents, indicates membership in the covenant community by virtue of their birth to believing parents. It does not in anyway signify saving faith on the part of the infant.)

(*Credobaptists and Paedobaptists both believe the baptism of confessing believers is an external sign or symbol of the inward reality of being washed clean (regenerated) from sin and saved into oneness with Christ Jesus. Most Credobaptists also see the immersion into the baptismal waters as a sign of oneness with Christ in his death and resurrection. Neither though, sees the act of baptism as a saving act in itself. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.)

3. **We all agree new believers, out of obedience to Christ's command and as an outward symbol of inward regeneration and cleansing, should be baptised.** The mode that a new believer wants applied is to be left up to individual conscience after receiving appropriate teaching (Baptism Classes), their own study of the scriptures and their own prayerful consideration before the Lord.

4. **We all agree that believing parents have a responsibility to teach their children the ways of the Lord in humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit** in the hope that the child will one day, through a conscience-decision on their own part, turn to Jesus and be saved. Such a responsibility should include praying regularly for their children, teaching their children the scriptures (in such things as family devotions) and modelling Christ Jesus to the child as Godly parents. In general this then means the children of believing parents are more blessed because of the ongoing exposure to Jesus and his teaching than children who are not. At Eastgate this commitment is expressed through the act of dedication for credo-baptists and is a part of the covenant ceremony for paedobaptists.

5. **We all agree that no parents or individuals will be 'forced' into baptising their children at Eastgate.** Neither will those that have been baptised as infants, who have a believable confession of faith and a conviction of the validity of that baptism, be 'forced' into baptism as a teenager or adult. All members will be reminded of the importance of this sacrament while acknowledging the

disagreement at Eastgate over this issue. All members of Eastgate will be encouraged to humbly seek the scriptures for themselves and, with prayerful consideration depending upon the Holy Spirit, come to a conviction for themselves on the issue.

This does not preclude parties on both sides -with graciousness, humility and charity - speaking of the reasons for their convictions and the importance thereof. Nor does this preclude the preaching staff, who from time to time, will come across verses pertaining to baptism in their sermon preparation, preaching from their own humble convictions on the matter - provided appropriate deference is given to the 'other side' and to the fact that both forms of baptism are practiced at Eastgate.

6. Given the difference of conviction on baptism at Eastgate, we all agree baptism ceremonies / services will always be announced at least three weeks in advance so that those of strong conviction can choose not to attend that service if they so desire.

7. We all agree that, wherever possible, those church leaders of one persuasion or another on the issue of baptism, should conduct and lead the ceremony of baptism according to their own conviction on the matter. i.e. a Credobaptist should not baptise a baby and a Paedobaptist who does not believe in immersion should not conduct a baptism by immersion. Where a paedobaptist or credobaptist leader is not available, one will be sought from a trusted fellowship elsewhere. With this in mind we all agree any mature leader at Eastgate can conduct a baptism service.

8. We all agree that while it is lamentable there is disagreement on this issue at Eastgate (and indeed in the wider church beyond Eastgate) we also agree that the practice and mode of Baptism is not an issue of first importance. This is not to say it is not important at all, we believe, on both sides of the issue, that it is. But it is not as important as other areas where we as a church are profoundly agreed. Issues such as the Glory of God in Christ, the Gospel of Jesus and the need for holy living (see our statement of faith in our Information Handbook).

Because the disagreement does not effect the Gospel, and for the sake of the steady advance of that gospel through our interdenominational church, we are committed to working together towards the propagation of the gospel to all people everywhere. We are also committed, as a fellowship, towards working towards greater unity on this and other issues of traditional disagreement. This is for the sake of the unity and purity of the church and for the glory of Christ's name who himself calls us to be one with Him as He is one with the Father and to be ready for His return.

9. We all agree that the other church sacrament / ordinance - communion - and the issue of children participating, is as important and weighty as Baptism. Here though there is greater unity at Eastgate. We all agree that communion should only be taken by those who have a credible confession of faith and evidence of this in their lives: for children we are agreed that parents are the best judge of this. Therefore parents at Eastgate are strongly encouraged to teach their children about the sacrament of communion and prayerfully assess their children's confession of faith in Jesus before allowing them to participate in the Lord's table.

All confessing believers at Eastgate, adult and child alike, are welcome to the table remembering the duty to examine oneself before doing so. Those who do not have such a confession should not participate in communion. From time to time classes on both sacraments will be held at the church and families are encouraged to attend - especially when a child is expressing interest in communion and/or baptism and parents feel that the child has a credible profession of faith. The structure of such classes will give appropriate and considered time to each side of the issue as well as the considerations of practicing both at Eastgate.

10. We all agree that official membership at Eastgate will be based upon a confession of faith, the understanding that they have been baptised in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit, and a credible witness to this confession in conduct. Attendants at Eastgate will not be refused membership based on the mode and time a person has received the baptismal sign. Attendants who have a confession of faith but have not been baptised and have no conviction regarding either stance will be strongly encouraged to seek the Lord in the scriptures on this matter and come to a position of their own.

11. We all agree that the sign of Baptism is a wonderful sacrament / ordinance given by the Lord Jesus to signify the deeper reality of the miracle of salvation and fellowship in the community of God called the church. As such all believers are encouraged to search the scriptures themselves regarding this sacrament and come to their own convictions on the matter.

Resources: There are many resources one could google on this issue and much discernment is necessary. The first resource any Christian should use, as we have used, is the bible remembering that despite the many disagreements of the 'experts' the Lord God has promised us the Holy Spirit Himself to help us discern the bible rightly. No Christian should ever, therefore, turn away from coming to a conviction on issues such as this one because the academic world (or we as leaders!) cannot come to agreement. Instead one should commit to study, prayer and dependence upon the Spirit of Jesus to learn what God would teach them - no academic qualifications necessary!

This does not in any way mean those who the Lord has gifted to teach and to learn at higher theological institutions should be ignored - just that they, like us, can be wrong. Here the Berean principle from Acts is worth recalling, that 'they searched the scriptures' to see if the things they were hearing from Paul were right. We too should search the scriptures ourselves when we hear respected people teaching to 'see if these things are so'. Furthermore we should not miss out on the blessing of faith-inspired obedience to God's holy word because of confusion - especially if we have only read googled articles and not the scriptures themselves as a part of prayerful study.

Nonetheless some teachers we respect, out of the many available on the internet, succinctly articulate the two baptismal positions practiced at Eastgate:

Covenantal Paedo Baptist

<http://media.thirdmill.org/mp3-32/eBAP.mp3>

Credo Baptist

http://www.christianessentialsbc.com/messages/message_2008.asp

Written copy available from Church Staff in Grudem's Systematic Theology

Question 10: Why do you have a constitution?

The constitution is a legal requirement for us as an associated incorporation dealing with non-profit finances. It is also a way of establishing an appropriate and formal structure for the functioning of church.

APPENDIX 1 - THE CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF EASTGATE BIBLE CHURCH