



# **Garden City Church**

**MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK**

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## HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

The instructions are simple: study and pray your way through this handbook. Sprinkled through this handbook are “Action Questions.” When you come to these questions, spend time thinking them through. These questions will help you engage and digest the important content in this document. We created this Membership Handbook and these questions to help you clearly grasp the adventure and responsibilities of membership at Garden City Church.

We are excited that you are pursuing the membership process. Please take a moment to pray as you begin your study, asking God to clearly teach you what membership means in the Bible and at Garden City. We encourage you to study this handbook over the course of several sittings (instead of all at once) and to do this along with someone else such as a spouse, roommate, Life Group member, or friend.

We believe that Garden City is built upon the backs of its members. We hope God leads you to join our mission and belong to our family.

**Action Question:**

What has led you to this point of pursuing membership at Garden City?

## INTRODUCTION TO MEMBERSHIP

### What is Membership?

- Membership is deciding to be “all in” at Garden City.
- Membership is committing to Garden City instead of “dating” Garden City.
- Membership is joining the mission and belonging to the family.
- Membership is moving from consumer to contributor.

Membership is obeying the New Testament call to live as an accountable member of a larger family/body: “For just as the body is one and has many members...all the members of the body, though many, are one body. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Cor. 12:12, 27).

**Membership is a covenant between committed people and the leadership of Garden City Church.**

#### **A Covenant:**

The weight of entering into a covenant is often diminished in our culture where casual promises and broken vows are the norm; however, we use this language intentionally to communicate that membership is to be considered with sobriety and commitment.

#### **Between Members And Leaders:**

**Members:** Those who seek the office of member commit to living a lifestyle that’s in line with Garden City’s mission and core values, and being held to a higher degree of accountability and responsibility by church leadership.

**Leaders:** Those who become members receive the promise of shepherding from the leadership of Garden City Church.

### A Biblical Metaphor:

The metaphor of membership is repeatedly highlighted throughout the New Testament to articulate both one's commitment to and unique role in a church family/body. This isn't membership as in a civic organization or country club. Becoming a member at Garden City doesn't give you a designated parking space, a T-shirt, or a status symbol to parade in the community. No, we're talking about the kind of membership given to us in 1 Corinthians 12: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor 12:27).

One author puts this well:

In addition to elders and deacons who lead the local church are non-Christians who are in the process of sorting out their relationship with God and church members who call the church their home and take responsibility to ensure its health and growth. Church members are Christians whose eyes are capable of seeing beyond their own navels. They realize that God died not just for them but for their church. They also realize that he commands them to selflessly give of their money and abilities in order to build up the church.

Some Christians question whether or not they need to have a church home in which they participate as official members. But the illustrative imagery of the church throughout the New Testament includes the fact the Christians are to work together like a family (1 Tim. 3:15; 5:1-2) or as parts of a body (1 Cor. 12:16-17). The early church had a notion of membership that included numerical record (Acts 2:37-47), records of widows (1 Tim. 5:3-16), elections (Acts 6:1-6), discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal 6:1), accountability (Heb. 13:17), and an awareness of who was a church member (Rom. 16:1-16). At the risk of stating the obvious, to obey most of the New Testament teaching requires that a Christian be a member of a local church.<sup>1</sup>

With this in mind, no one should enter into the membership covenant simply because they've been around a while and figure it's the next step or "something you should do."

### A Serious Commitment:

Membership is an informed commitment to the vision, mission, values, doctrine, and philosophy of ministry of Garden City, a willing submission to the leadership of the church, and an intentional embrace of your unique role in the church family and our mission to Silicon Valley.

Most organization and club members are consumers—the organization exists to serve them. Membership in the church is entirely different. Membership at Garden City means ministry and service, moving from being a consumer to being a giver. Instead of always asking, "How can Garden City and others serve me?," our members regularly ask the question, "How can I best serve my church and my city?"

<sup>1</sup> *On Church Leadership* (Crossway, 2008), pp. 57-58

**Action Question:**

How can you best serve Garden City and our mission to the city?

## Why Commitment Is Important

### **Our mission and our own personal growth require commitment, especially when it's hard.**

Garden City's mission is to make disciples who impact our city for Jesus. We are committed to being healthy disciples of Jesus and to making healthy disciples of Jesus who love both our church family and our city. This means that we strive to help you grow in maturity and fruitfulness. This means that sometimes you will be challenged by things you hear from the pulpit, experience in your Life Group, and encounter in discipleship relationships. Sometimes you will be called to step outside of your comfort zone. Sometimes decisions will be made that don't align with your preferences. Your idols will be threatened. Sometimes you will discover that our mission is harder than you thought. You will, inevitably, experience conflict, hurt, difficulty, and unmet expectations. With the gospel at our center of our identity as a church family, instead of being harmful these experiences of conflict can actually be healthy for both you and our church.

Remember, the local church is the one organization that admits to being a place filled with sinners. So, by joining Garden City you are joining a family of imperfect sinners who are still learning how to best love God and love one another while living out our mission to impact our city. What we are seeking to do as a church is not easy. We are doing something that can only be done in God's strength. Like any great adventure, this adventure involves its ups and downs.

Your first inclination may be to bail as soon as you get uncomfortable. Past experience may tell you that the slightest conflict equals the end of a relationship. If all you are doing is "dating" and "consumer-izing" the church, without investment or commitment, you may be tempted to simply move on as soon as the initial honeymoon starts to fade. After all, there's another church down the road. But just like in the covenant of marriage, growth happens when we stay true to our commitment, address sin and conflict, and allow ourselves to be challenged and stretched. That's where the deep growth, repentance, discipleship, and joy happen.

Garden City isn't a perfect community, but it's a safe community—a safe place to be known and loved by God and other members of the family who are all growing together in this great adventure.

### **Commitment is also necessary because members have a vital role to play in Garden City Church.**

The church has a blemished track record of allowing members to become observers and consumers while pastors/elders, deacons, and staff are looked upon to provide services and do ministry. However, at Garden City we are committed to equipping members to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12) and to operate in their gifts so that the church grows into a mature, healthy body (Ephesians 4:15-16). Pastors cannot meet every need in the church, nor can they singlehandedly impact our city. But a committed, entrepreneurial body of disciples of Jesus has the opportunity to make significant impact. It's what God desires for us and from us. The Garden City mission—Depending on God to grow disciples deep and wide for God's Glory—is a mission to be carried out by every member of the church.

Again, a pastor articulates this well:

“...church members are, in a sense, leaders of the church who serve according to their abilities in accordance with Jesus’ command to love God and their neighbor; this shows up not just in what they feel, but in what they do. The church members must be trained and released to use their spiritual gifts in various ways so that they too are leading the church behind the elders and deacons as the priesthood of believers that Scripture speaks of throughout the New Testament. This includes nursery captains working with little people, home-based Bible study leaders, worship band leaders, usher and greeter captains, technical team leaders, and leaders of various mercy ministries. Those who function as exemplary church members are then qualified to occupy the church leadership positions of deacon and elder, respectively.”<sup>2</sup>

Our strategy for accomplishing the mission of our church is quite simple. Our strategy is you. Our strategy is a church full of members who gather and scatter throughout our city, with each member uniquely contributing to the mission of growing disciples.

Action Question:

Why is church membership biblical?

What are the dangers and difficulties involved if a church doesn’t practice membership?

## The Membership Process

The Garden City membership process is simple yet thorough. We simply want to assess two things:

1) Are you a Christian? 2) Do you understand what it means to be passionately committed to and function as a healthy member of this particular local church? To help you and to help us along this path, our membership process involves three steps:

### Step 1: Explore

Join a Life Group and read the Garden City Church Membership Handbook.

### Step 2: Interview

Fill out the [Membership Application](#). Once your application is submitted, your Life Group leader will schedule your membership interview. These interviews are generally brief, yet thorough. Your LG leader will interview you to assess if 1) you clearly understand what we expect of Garden City members, 2) you are ready to make this commitment. When you pass the interview, you move to step three.

### Step 3: Go Public

Sign the Garden City Membership Covenant and “go public” with your membership commitment. At our next Membership Sunday (these happen quarterly) you will stand up front with all the other new members and will be prayed for by the whole church.

Note:

If you haven’t yet been baptized, you also commit to being baptized at our next Baptism Sunday.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

## GARDEN CITY CHURCH DNA

DNA is a set of instructions deep within the cells of an organism that directs how it develops, grows, and self-replicates. What follows is the DNA of Garden City: the vision, the mission, core values, doctrine, philosophy of ministry, and biblical convictions that define, drive, and shape who we are and what we do as a church family.

### History

Garden City Church started with God. Therefore, our history is actually a rather long one. We believe that before the beginning of time God had a plan for Garden City and how we would impact our city —“he chose us in him before the foundation of the world...” (Eph 1:4).

In 2011, Justin and Taylor Buzzard and their three young sons moved to Silicon Valley with a dream. The God-sized dream was to start a new church that would engage the people of Silicon Valley with the gospel in a new and profound way. The day they moved they had only three people committed to the church plant and just \$3,000 in the church bank account. It was a move of faith, banking on Jesus’ words “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).

Garden City Church launched on September 18th, 2011. The church grew through the compelling power of the gospel, our contagious community, and living on mission to make disciples. In addition to multiplying disciples, Garden City multiplies churches. In August 2020, Garden City sent out 50 members, a staff pastor, and funds to plant Quicksilver Church.

Jesus is on the move in and through Garden City. We invite you to join us and contribute to the next chapter of Garden City’s story.

#### Action Question:

What unique role is God calling you to play in shaping the future story of Garden City Church?

### Vision

San Jose is California’s first city. Founded in 1777, the early settlers of San Jose called their new home the “Garden City” because everything they planted grew and flourished in the city’s good soil and temperate climate. This was a prophetic name for the city that’s grown to become the “Capital of Silicon Valley.” Silicon Valley is home to over 2 million people and home to major global corporations such as Google, Apple, eBay, Cisco, and Adobe. Silicon Valley is a flourishing and strategic city that plays a pivotal economic and cultural role in our global world. What happens in Vegas might stay in Vegas, but what happens in Silicon Valley impacts the world.

We love Silicon Valley. It’s a beautiful place to live and work. Yet Silicon Valley is also a broken city teeming with over-worked and under-loved people seeking meaning, hope, and glory in everything except the God who created them. The nearly 8-million-person San Francisco Bay Area is perhaps the most un-churched region in America.

Forbes Magazine has called our city both “the most innovative city in America” and “the most sinful city in America.” Silicon Valley needs not just one new church; it needs hundreds of new churches. Things don’t have to stay the way they are. Our dream is for Garden City Church to pioneer a gospel movement, a church planting movement, in the Bay Area. In August 2020, God provided as we sent out our Associate Pastor Fred Mok with 50 church members and some money to plant Quicksilver Church in the midst of a pandemic, making our dream a reality when it seemed least possible.

We have a supernatural vision for our church. It's a God-sized vision. We believe God wants to use our church to help turn Silicon Valley—a place known for its technological impact—into a region also known for its worship of Jesus and its gospel impact. Instead of Apple, Google, or Facebook, we want to see God's name become the biggest name in Silicon Valley. We believe God wants to use our church to raise the dead, to turn spiritually dead people into worshippers of the risen and reigning Jesus who are passionate to see others meet, enjoy, and follow Jesus. Hence our mission: Making Disciples Who Impact Our City For Jesus.

The story of the Bible starts in a Garden (Eden) and ends in a Garden City (the New Jerusalem). It's the story of God rescuing and redeeming broken people and renewing broken cities. We believe God has called us to plant something new in the Garden City—to plant a church that will impact a city that's impacting the rest of the world. Through Garden City Church we hope to make the gospel of Jesus Christ accessible to the people of Silicon Valley in a new and profound way. Our prayer is that Silicon Valley will be a better city because Garden City Church exists. Our hope is that other parts of the world will feel this too.

**Action Question:**

What does it mean that Garden City has a supernatural, God-sized vision instead of a human-sized vision?

## Mission:

### **Making Disciples Who Impact Our City for Jesus**

These eight words are what Garden City Church is all about. To join Garden City you're not joining a static entity, you're joining a dynamic mission. Jumping into the life of our church means committing to proactively advance our mission to go & make disciples. These eight words (which are our way of stating Jesus' mission for his church: the Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20) guide and shape everything we are and everything we do as Garden City Church.

Jesus has given his church only one mission: make disciples. There are many things we could do and many things that could distract us as a church. Because of what Jesus has told us, we have decided to focus on just one thing at Garden City: growing disciples.

BUT, even more important than our mission is our identity. A "disciple" is a person who is now defined by the love of God instead of being defined by their performance, their past, or their pain. A disciple is someone whose life is powered by God, not self. A disciple is someone who is growing in their relationship with Jesus and helping others meet Jesus and mature in him. Our mission to make disciples flows from our identity as disciples, as beloved sons and daughters of God. It's critical that we remember our identity first and then, encouraged and empowered by the good news of the gospel, we carry out of mission. Jesus' words in John 15 drive our mission: we are mere branches called to abide in the love of Jesus our vine, and as we live this dependent life our God will use us diverse branches to bear fruit for his Kingdom.

We want Garden City members to wake up in the morning and concentrate on the reality that their identity and standing with God doesn't depend on what they DO, but on what Jesus has DONE for them. We are an unfinished people resting in the finished work of Jesus. As we rest in the reality that God perfectly knows and loves us and is passionately committed to spreading his glory throughout the earth, we naturally move forward in mission—growing disciples deep & wide for God's glory. We grow disciples deep (rootedness in God, core relationships, and our home in Silicon Valley), wide (breadth of influence, stretching out our branches to bless others), and for God's glory.



Garden City is not a church where we will allow you to be passive or to be a consumer. Garden City grows disciples instead of pleasing consumers. Members of Garden City Church are called to take initiative to live out our mission. This mission is for all of us.

Though Garden City is governed and led by a team of pastors/elders and additionally led by an ever-growing team of deacons who assist the elders in shepherding the flock and growing disciples, we want a church full of leaders. Our members are leaders. Whether or not you ever hold a leadership title at Garden City, we want a church full of members who take the lead in carrying out our mission. If you become a member, this becomes your mission.

This mission isn't easy. You will meet resistance from the Enemy as you pursue this mission and this mission will require you to supernaturally rely on God. Though difficult, joining this mission will be immensely rewarding as you watch Jesus use you and use our church in supernatural ways.

What drives our mission is the finished work of Christ (the gospel). Pursuing this mission doesn't earn us anything. We pursue this mission as a response to the life-changing grace of God. Ultimately, this is Jesus' mission. He's building our church and he calls and empowers us to join him in his supernatural disciple-making mission. We think it's the most exciting thing anyone could be a part of.

Action Question:

What excites you about Garden City's Mission?

## CORE VALUES/BEHAVIORS

Garden City has just three core values. These three values are our guiding principles for living out the unique way in which God has called us to make disciples in Silicon Valley. The specific methods by which these values are expressed could change over the years, but the values themselves will not change. We will always be a church body that is directed by and committed to these three core values. We also call these core values "behaviors", because they compel us to act in some specific countercultural ways that impact our city.

### 1. Gospel

#### Adventure with Jesus

Whoever you are, whatever you've done, whatever you're going through—Jesus pursues you with good news and calls you into a new adventure with him. We are a church anchored in the gospel and excited about taking next steps with Jesus.

The gospel is the good news that we can enjoy a relationship with God and bring renewal to the world through the work, record, and performance of Jesus, rather than through our own performance—Jesus lived a perfect life for us, died for our sins, and rose again on our behalf. The gospel is how we both get in and grow in the Christian life. This message changes us from the inside out, transforming our hearts and our behavior. The gospel frees us to continually discover and say, "I am more broken and sinful than I ever dared believe, but in Jesus I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope." This provides a radically new orientation to life and work for the people of Silicon Valley. The



gospel of grace frees us from the idols that enslave us—frees us to live for God’s glory, not our own. What every human wants is to be both known and loved. The gospel announces that because of Jesus, we can have this: we can be known and loved by God. Jesus changes everything. Jesus gives his disciples a new identity, a new record, a new power, and a new future. The gospel is the driving center of everything we are and everything we do as a church. We not only proclaim the gospel, we aim to create a gospel culture at Garden City.

We are a church anchored in the gospel and excited about taking next steps with Jesus.

Action Question:

Why is it so important for the gospel to be at the center of a church?

What might happen when a church loses its focus on the gospel?



## 2. Community

### Bring People With You

Life is impossible without friends. Our relational God created you for community. We are a church to belong to and bring to—Monday through Sunday we create community and make disciples by bringing people with us as we go about our lives in our city.

Through the gospel we gain a new, true human community of deep and diverse friendships with brothers and sisters in Christ who come from all walks of life. The church is not a meeting you attend, it is a network of relationships you belong to—a big family that’s built upon grace and is busy pursuing Jesus’ mission together. As we do life together as members of a community, knowing and loving one another, our city will notice. “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). We gather and scatter in our city no longer living for ourselves, but as connected and committed members of a family/body. In community, Jesus changes us and uses us. He shrinks our pride and surfaces our gifts. We come to see that all people stand on equal ground at the foot of the cross, giving us a freeing humility that welcomes the messy and glorious work of being a family and finding our unique place in the family.

As a community of men and women, we are all equal, but not the same. The church community is modeled off of the nuclear family, where both men and women ambitiously lead and contribute, yet with distinct roles that complement one another. Both men and women are equal and lead in our family, yet in a way that honors the distinctive leadership role God has given qualified men as the head of their homes and as pastors/elders. Our model is our Triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—who have eternally enjoyed loving, servant-hearted community, yet with each member of the Trinity exercising different roles.

We are a church to belong to and bring to.

Action Question:

What do you see as your unique role, gifts, and strengths in our church community?



### 3. Vocation

#### Carry Out Your Calling

God placed you in Silicon Valley with a vocation, a calling to use your unique life to do work that impacts our city...and eternity. We are a church of diverse men and women exploring how to best use our particular stories and strengths to make a life-giving impact.

We are a church of missionaries where every member is on mission to delight in, declare, and demonstrate the gospel to our city, yet in diverse ways that are true to who we are as unique image bearers of God. Disciple-making isn't something we add to our lives, it's something we weave through all that we do as part of the diverse ways we're each called to know and love our city. God wants us to thrive in our vocations, to use our unique design and calling to reveal God to the world and to help others flourish and discover more of who they are as image bearers of God. As we each carry out our callings with excellence, thoughtfulness, and prayer in the homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces where God has placed us, we advance not only our careers, but also the mission of God.

We do our most fruitful mission work by living out our ordinary lives with gospel intentionality, not through attending a busy schedule of religious activities. As we each explore who we are and the unique work God has called us to do, we will be a church that makes Silicon Valley a better city. As one writer puts it, "The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work that you need most to do and that the world needs most to have done...The place God calls you to is where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."<sup>3</sup>

We are a church of diverse men and women exploring how to best use our particular stories and strengths to make a life-giving impact.

Action Question:

Where do your deep gladness and our city's deep hunger meet?

## PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

### Simple And Focused

We are focused on our mission at Garden City. We evaluate everything we do on the basis of whether or not it helps or hinders us from making disciples. As a result, we have a very focused and simple philosophy of ministry at Garden City. We say that we are like In-N-Out Burger, a place that focuses on doing just two things (burgers and fries), but does those two things really well. In line with our mission and our core values, Garden City is focused on doing just two things really well: Gathering and Scattering.

There is so much ministry and activity happening in and through our church, but it all flows from our rhythm of gathering and scattering. At Garden City you'll find friends meeting for coffee, people serving the poor, people meeting in small groups, people playing together on a softball team or praying together downtown, parties and events, and so much more. But all of this is ministry and community, which is not officially planned by church leadership. It's ministry that happens as an outflow of our rhythm of gathering and scattering:

<sup>3</sup>Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*.

## Gathering

### Sundays

Every Sunday Garden City gathers as a big family to worship God, hear the preaching of God's Word, grow in discipleship, love and serve one another, take part in the sacraments, be equipped for ministry, and be a gospel witness to Silicon Valley. Sundays fuel us for a new week of ministry in the city.

### Life Groups

During the week, Garden City gathers in smaller groups, called Life Groups, throughout the Bay Area. Life Groups are where our Discipleship Culture—"sharing the gospel and our lives" (1 Thes 2:8)—happens at a more intimate and accountable level. Our groups range in size from 5–20 people, most are intentionally intergenerational and co-ed, and men serve as the primary leader of mixed-gender groups. Every Life Group Commits to 3 things:

1. **Mission:** We advance the mission of our church: Making disciples who impact our city for Jesus (Go & Make). We invite our non-Christian friends into Life Group and Sundays.
2. **Gather:** We gather regularly to eat OR do a physical activity, study along with the Garden City sermon series (or other elder-approved content), share our lives, and pray. We follow Jesus' model of making disciples through meals, movement, doing things together.
3. **Multiply:** We multiply (instead of replace). We develop and send leaders from this group to start more groups at the beginning of our Fall or Spring Semesters.

### Expectations

We expect everyone who becomes a member to make gathering at Garden City a high priority—to schedule life so as to be present and contribute to what takes place on Sundays and in Life Group. We think there are three great and acceptable reasons to miss gathering at Garden City.

- **Vacation:** We want you to take vacation in order to rest, recharge, and have a lot of fun!
- **Sickness:** Please stay home if you're sick! It is important that you rest and get well so that you can gather with your family again.
- **A Special Event:** Throughout the course of a year we expect that there will be rare and special events that you feel God has called you to, and which require you to miss out on gathering with your family. Examples include emergencies, business trips, weddings, etc.

Gathering on Sundays and in your Life Group is critical to your own health, our whole church's health, and it's what fuels you for each new week of ministry in our city. Members prioritize gathering at the top of their weekly schedule. We are a church body that needs each member of the body to be present and functioning as a member of the body. We live in a city that is highly individualistic, where decisions are made only in reference to "me" and where even many Christians believe that passively attending a church service once or twice a month represents healthy Christianity. We are seeking to directly challenge and change this culture, to show our city what it looks like to belong to something much more exciting: a family on a mission to enjoy God, love one another, and love our city. We are seeking to be obedient to the New Testament, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:27).

### Garden City Events

From time to time we also gather at events that are sprinkled throughout the year—training classes, meetings, conferences, retreats, etc.—that supplement our mission to grow disciples but our focus remains on Sundays and Groups.

## Scattering

We want everyone at Garden City to see themselves as missionaries to Silicon Valley. Most of Garden City's ministry to the city happens during the week as software engineers, teachers, stay-at-home moms, carpenters, business leaders, college students, baristas, and entrepreneurs live as unique image bearers in their workplaces neighborhoods, and homes with gospel intentionality and with a view toward making disciples and impacting our city.

Instead of asking you to attend a busy week of church programs, we want you scattered throughout our city, discovering the unique ways God wants to use you in our city. Our strategy for reaching the city is simple. Our strategy is people. Our strategy is the members of our church. Our strategy is you. God has already placed you in a particular place with particular relationships where you are called to advance the mission. We're all learning from each other and we're excited to learn from you and the unique ways God will use you to impact our city.

For more information on our philosophy on making disciples, see our [Discipleship Culture Guidebook](#)

### Action Question:

What excites you about Garden City's simple philosophy of ministry?

## Church Planting: City-Focused

Garden City cares deeply about our city and about other strategic worldwide cities. We also care deeply about church planting. We believe the best way to advance the gospel and make disciples is by planting new churches in strategic cities. In 2020, we planted our first church, sending out our associate pastor and 50 people with a sum of money in South San Jose. Garden City also gives away 10% of our budget to our mission partners, most of whom are church plants.

The city is more important than it's ever been. Right now, more people live in cities than at any other time in human history. Never before has the majority of the world's population been an urban population. Cities have always played a central role in human history and in God's redemptive plan for the world. Cities have long stood as powerful places of cultural development, influence, and invention—offering hope, refuge, and new beginnings. But never before have cities been as populated, powerful, and important as they are today.

The world is changing. Our world is experiencing the largest movement of urban growth in history. Our world is now predominately urban, and there's no going back. This new reality, this new world, presents a historic opportunity for Christians.

At no time in history has our world looked so similar to the setting of the early church. Read the book of Acts and you read about a world that looks much like our own — an urban, pluralistic, cosmopolitan, diverse, dynamic, rapidly changing, and fast-developing world. Two thousand years ago, God built his kingdom through planting churches in cities. The book of Acts is a story about the geographic expansion of the gospel through city church planting.

Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome are where churches were planted, the gospel was preached, and disciples were made. These cities became healthier communities because Christians were there.

These cities were strategically engaged so that surrounding regions could be reached. Today's world is similar, only today if you reach a city then you reach the world. Never before has the majority of the world's population been a city population. Never before have urban centers held such significance and power. What we're witnessing is both similar to and grander than the world inhabited by the early church.

The opportunity is staggering. What God did two thousand years ago is something that God can do again today. In fact, God can do something even greater in our day — for he is God and our cities offer tremendous potential for gospel growth. The dream behind Garden City is rooted in these biblical convictions. We hope to impact Silicon Valley to such a degree that we can become a beachhead church that plants and resources other churches throughout the Bay Area and helps plant other churches in strategic international cities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>For a profile on understanding the unique dynamics of our city, see chapter 4 of Justin Buzzard and Stephen Um's *Why Cities Matter*, (Crossway, 2013).

## DOCTRINE

The Garden City statement of faith articulates the doctrine we believe as a church. These beliefs are foundational to our church, a summary of what the Bible proclaims about the central matters of our faith. Read this section carefully. First read the actual statement of faith (Statement), then read the “Summary” which summarizes the main idea of the doctrine. If you have any further questions, look up the Scripture references on which the statement of faith is based. By becoming a member you are stating your agreement and alignment with these 13 points of our doctrinal statement.

Garden City Church is a nondenominational church. We are affiliated with [Fellowship Associates](#). Our doctrine can be accurately referred to as “Reformed” theology in our view of God, human nature, sin, and salvation. However, we don’t really care about labels at Garden City, we simply care about teaching what the Bible says—we care about teaching, preaching, and living biblical doctrine.

The 13 statements below summarize biblical doctrine, which is gospel-centered doctrine. We believe the Bible is centered on the message of the gospel and we want our doctrine and our life as a church to be centered on and continually shaped by this same gospel.

**Action Question:**

Why is it crucial to have a clear doctrinal statement in a church?

### 1. The Triune God

**Statement:** 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.

**Summary:** God eternally exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we are created to worship the one true God.

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 3:16–17; Matthew 28:19

### 2. Revelation

**Statement:** 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.

Summary: God has revealed himself through creation, through Jesus, and through the Scriptures. We are called to submit to, study, and joyfully obey the authoritative Word of God.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21; John 8:31–32

### 3. Creation of Humanity

Statement: 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.

Summary: God created men and women in his image. We are created, dependent beings, and recognize that men and women are created to complement one another by assuming distinct roles in the family and church.

Scripture: Genesis 1:27–31; Genesis 2:18–25; Ephesians 5:22–33; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Romans 16:1–4; 1 Timothy 2:8–15

### 4. The Fall

Statement: 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.

Summary: We are sinners by nature and by choice. The just penalty for our sins is death; apart from God's gracious intervention, we are under the wrath of God.

Scripture: Genesis 3:1–7; Romans 5:12,19; Romans 3:10–12



## 5. The Plan of God

**Statement:** 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.

**Summary:** God does the work of choosing and saving those who put their faith in Jesus. We are called to repent and believe.

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:3–10; Revelation 5:9–10; Romans 8:29–30; Acts 17:30–31

## 6. The Gospel

**Statement:** 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, centering 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).

**Summary:** The gospel is the good news of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Both Christians and non-Christians need the gospel.

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 2:1–5; 1 Corinthians 15:1–8; 1 John 1:1–4; Romans 10:9–13

## 7. The Redemption of Christ

**Statement:** 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 canceled 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; our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

Summary: Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Scriptures, fully God and fully man, who has accomplished redemption for sinners. Jesus is the only way to salvation.

Scripture: John 1:14; Matthew 1:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Timothy 2:5; Matthew 28:18; Romans 3:21–27; John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 1:20–31

## 8. The Justification of Sinners

Statement: 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.

Summary: Jesus' sinless life and atoning sacrifice is credited to all who trust in him as full payment for their sins, putting them in right standing with God. We are motivated towards obedience because of the gift of justification.

Scripture: Romans 3:21–31; Titus 2:11–14; Titus 3:3–8

## 9. The Power of The Holy Spirit

Statement: 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, and in him they are baptized 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.

Summary: The Holy Spirit is actively working before, during, and after salvation. He lives within all followers of Jesus and powerfully guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:25–27; Ephesians 1:13–14; John 14:16–17; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:8–14; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 12:1–11

## 10. The Kingdom of God

**Statement:** 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 honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing who's created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors 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 kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

**Summary:** The Kingdom of God is the exercise of God's sovereignty in all of creation, and will be fully realized in the new heaven and new earth. We take part in advancing the Kingdom of God by living as salt and light in our city.

**Scripture:** Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 5:13-16; Matthew 22:36-40; Galatians 6:10; Colossians 1:15-19; Revelation 21:1-5

## 11. God's New People

**Statement:** 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 neighbors, 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.

**Summary:** God continues his work on earth through the church. 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.

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:16-23; Ephesians 5:25; Matthew 28:18-20; John 13:34; Ephesians 2:14-16, 19-22

## 12. Baptism and The Lord's Supper

**Statement:** 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.

**Summary:** Baptism and the Lord's Supper are commanded in Scripture for believers as a sign of initiation and covenant renewal for followers of Jesus Christ. We practice "believer's baptism" by full submersion at Garden City Church.\*

\*Note: At Garden City Church, we practice "believer's baptism," believing that baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a thoughtful profession of faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, we believe that baptism should come after faith in Jesus, rather than before. For this reason, we do not baptize infants or small children that are unable to make a thoughtful profession of faith (A child must be at least 5 years old to be considered for baptism at Garden City). We understand that some within our church family may have different convictions about baptism. Therefore, we will not necessarily exclude from membership those who do not agree with our position on baptism—who were baptized as infants and decline to be baptized as believers, though we do expect that they have a theologically defensible reason for holding to infant baptism and that they will not allow this non-essential issue to cause division in the church.

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:18–20; Romans 6:3–5; Matthew 26:26–28; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

## 13. The Restoration Of All Things

**Statement:** 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 ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

**Summary:** God will physically resurrect all people at the return of Jesus Christ for either an eternity in hell or an eternity in the new heaven and new earth. God will renew creation and his people will joyfully live forever in the new heaven and new earth.

**Scripture:** Revelation 19:11–16; 1 Corinthians 15:20–26; Revelation 21:1–5

**Action Question:**

Some churches have very short doctrinal statements. Other churches have more robust doctrinal statements. Garden City has adopted the above robust doctrinal statement (our statement is taken from The Gospel Coalition). What benefits do you see to Garden City having a robust doctrinal statement?

## BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

The following are practical issues that Garden City has chosen to take positions on out of our conviction that Scripture gives clear guidance to each. All theology is practical, but because these issues deal more specifically with the nature, organization, and functioning of the church, we have chosen to place them in their own section, distinct from the broad theology outlined in the Doctrine section.

### 1. Church Leadership: Jesus, Elders/Pastors, Deacons, And Members

#### Who Are The Leaders?

- Jesus is the chief shepherd of Garden City Church.
- Garden City is governed and led by a team of qualified male pastors/elders.
- Garden City deacons are qualified men and women who assist the elders in shepherding and discipling the church.
- Members of Garden City are also leaders who take responsibility for the health and growth of the church.

#### Jesus

Above all, Jesus is the ultimate leader of Garden City Church. The elders look to Jesus to guide, govern, and build our church. We firmly stand upon Jesus' words: "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

#### Pastors | Elders

The consistent pattern throughout the New Testament is that each local body of believers is shepherded by a plurality of qualified, male elders. Just as men are called to lovingly lead their families, qualified men are called to lovingly govern and lead the church. Simply stated, this is the only pattern for church leadership given in the New Testament. Elders are charged with three primary responsibilities as outlined in 1 Peter 5:1-4:

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

Elders shepherd the flock (know and love the sheep), exercise oversight (lead and protect the sheep), and serve as examples (model health for the sheep). Throughout the New Testament we also see the need for a senior leader called to lead the team of elders. He is a first-among-equals; a leader of leaders who is accountable to the rest of the team and shares equal authority with the rest of the elder team. The elders of our church have a big job. As a member, we request that you regularly pray for our elders as they seek to follow Jesus and govern our church.

#### Deacons

Garden City deacons are qualified men and women who assist the elders in shepherding and discipling the church. Garden City endeavors to be governed and led by a handful of qualified male elders who are assisted by an ever-growing mass of qualified male and female deacons who lead Life Groups throughout Silicon Valley. In co-ed Life Groups that are led by a husband and wife team, even though both serve as deacons, the male deacon operates as the primary

leader of the Life Group just as a husband operates as the loving head and servant-leader of his family.

### Members

Though the elders govern the church, and deacons and staff assist them, we believe that it's not just those with a title that are to lead and do ministry. Every member of Garden City is called to operate as a minister and leader by helping serve the church body and by being busy with the work of growing disciples to impact the city for Jesus. Members should set the pace for the rest of the church in terms of serving the church and serving our city.

For a deeper understanding and defense of how Garden City is governed, we strongly suggest all of our members read *On Church Leadership*, by Mark Driscoll (Crossway, 2008). If you want to dig even deeper, we encourage you to read *Elders and Leaders: God's Plan For Leading The Church*, by Gene Getz (2003: Zondervan).

Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:1-9; Philippians 1:1-2; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17

#### Action Question:

What has been your previous church experience? How was the church governed and led?

## 2. Conflict and Church Discipline

### Key Points:

- Conflict is inevitable in the church.
- Conflict is also an opportunity to glorify God and grow as a Christian.
- Garden City members are responsible to respond to conflict with humility and the power of the gospel, pursuing the four G's of biblical peacemaking.
- Idolatry is at the root of our sin and most of our conflicts. The Bible does not allow the church to tolerate willful, unrepentant sin.
- God gives church leadership authority to carry out formal church discipline if necessary.

Statement<sup>5</sup>: Conflict is inevitable in human relationships and in the church, therefore we must prepare for it. Conflict is not necessarily bad or destructive.

Even when conflict is caused by sin and causes a great deal of stress, God can use it for good (see Rom. 8:28-29). As the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, conflict actually provides three significant opportunities. By God's grace, you can use conflict to:

- Glorify God (by trusting, obeying, and imitating Him).
- Serve other people (by helping to bear their burdens or by confronting them in love).
- Grow to be like Christ (by confessing sin and turning from attitudes that promote conflict).

<sup>5</sup> Most of this section is adapted from *Resolving Everyday Conflict* by Ken Sande (Baker, 2011). We strongly encourage all of our members to read this brief and important book.

These concepts are totally overlooked in most conflicts because people naturally focus on escaping from the situation or overcoming their opponent. Therefore, it is wise to periodically step back from a conflict and ask yourself whether you are doing all that you can to take advantage of these special opportunities.

**At Garden City we ask our members to follow the four G's of biblical peacemaking:**

### **1. Glorify God**

When the Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians to live "to the glory of God," he was not talking about one hour on Sunday morning. He wanted them to show God honor and bring him praise in day-to-day life, especially by the way that they resolved personal conflicts (see 1 Cor. 10:31).

As mentioned above, you can glorify God in the midst of conflict by trusting him, obeying him, and imitating him (see Prov. 3:4-6; John 14:15; Eph. 5:1). One of the best ways to keep these concerns uppermost in your mind is to regularly ask yourself this focusing question: "How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?"

### **2. Get The Log Out Of Your Own Eye**

One of the most challenging principles of peacemaking is set forth in Matthew 7:5, where Jesus says, "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." There are generally two kinds of "logs" you need to look for when dealing with conflict. First, you need to ask whether you have had a critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. One of the best ways to do this is to spend some time meditating on Philippians 4:2-9, which describes the kind of attitude Christians should have even when they are involved in a conflict. The second kind of log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because you are often blind to your own sins, you may need an honest friend or advisor who will help you to take an objective look at yourself and face up to your contribution to a conflict.

When you identify ways that you have wronged another person, it is important to admit your wrongs honestly and thoroughly. The most important aspect of getting the log out of your own eye is to go beyond the confession of wrong behavior and face up to the root cause of that behavior. The Bible teaches that conflict comes from the desires that battle in your heart (James 4:1-3; Matt. 15:18-19). Some of these desires are obviously sinful, such as wanting to conceal the truth, bend others to your will, or have revenge. In many situations, however, conflict is fueled by good desires that you have elevated to sinful demands, such as a craving to be understood, loved, respected, or vindicated.

Any time you become excessively preoccupied with something, even a good thing, and seek to find happiness, security or fulfillment in it rather than in God, you are guilty of idolatry. Idolatry inevitably leads to conflict with God ("You shall have no other gods before me"). It also causes conflict with other people. As James writes, when we want something but don't get it, we kill and covet, quarrel and fight (James 4:1-4).

There are three basic steps you can take to overcome the idolatry that fuels conflict. First, you should ask God to help you see where you have been guilty of wrong worship, that is, where you are focusing your love, attention, and energy on something other than God. Second, you should specifically identify and renounce each of the desires contributing to the conflict. Third, you should deliberately pursue right worship, that is, to fix your heart and mind on God and to seek joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in him alone.

As God guides and empowers these efforts, you can find freedom from the idols that fuel conflict and be motivated to make choices that will please and honor Christ. This change in heart will usually speed a resolution to a present problem, and at the same time improve your ability to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

### 3. Gently Restore

Another key principle of peacemaking involves an effort to help others understand how they have contributed to a conflict. When Christians think about talking to someone else about a conflict, one of the first verses that comes to mind is Matthew 18:15: “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.” If this verse is read in isolation, it seems to teach that we must always use direct confrontation to force others to admit they have sinned. If the verse is read in context, however, we see that Jesus had something much more flexible and beneficial in mind than simply standing toe to toe with others and describing their sins.

Just before this passage, we find Jesus’ wonderful metaphor of a loving shepherd who goes to look for a wandering sheep and then rejoices when it is found (Matt. 18:12–14). Thus, Matthew 18:15 is introduced with a theme of restoration, not condemnation. Jesus repeats this theme just after telling us to “go and show him his fault” by adding, “If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.” And then he hits the restoration theme a third time in verses 21–35, where he uses the parable of the unmerciful servant to remind us to be as merciful and forgiving to others as God is to us (Matt. 18:21–35).

Jesus is clearly calling for something much more loving and redemptive than simply confronting others with a list of their wrongs. Similarly, Galatians 6:1 gives us solid counsel on what our attitude and purpose ought to be when we go to our brother. “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.” Our attitude should be one of gentleness rather than anger, and our purpose should be to restore rather than condemn.

Yet even before you go to talk with someone, remember that it is appropriate to overlook minor offenses (see Prov. 19:11). As a general rule, an offense should be overlooked if you can answer “no” to all of the following questions:

- Is the offense seriously dishonoring God?
- Has it permanently damaged a relationship?
- Is it seriously hurting other people?
- Is it seriously hurting the offender himself?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, an offense is too serious to overlook, in which case God commands you to go and talk with the offender privately and lovingly about the situation. As you do so, remember to:

- Pray for humility and wisdom.
- Plan your words carefully (think of how you would want to be confronted).
- Anticipate likely reactions and plan appropriate responses (rehearsals can be very helpful).
- Choose the right time and place (talk in person whenever possible).
- Assume the best about the other person until you have facts to prove otherwise (Prov. 11:27).
- Listen carefully (Prov. 18:13).
- Speak only to build others up (Eph. 4:29).
- Ask for feedback from the other person.
- Recognize your limits; only God can change people (Rom. 12:18; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).



If an initial conversation does not resolve a conflict, do not give up. Review what was said and done, and look for ways to make a better approach during a follow up conversation. It may also be wise to ask a spiritually mature friend for advice on how to approach the other person more effectively. Then try again with even stronger prayer support.

If repeated, careful attempts at a private discussion are not fruitful, and if the matter is still too serious to overlook, you should ask one or two other people to meet with you and your opponent and help you to resolve your differences (see Matt. 18:16-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8). If these steps prove unfruitful and unrepentant sin persists with someone at Garden City Church, steps should be made towards more formal church discipline by the elders (see the final paragraph of this statement).

#### 4. Go And Be Reconciled

One of the most unique features of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though Christians have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show that forgiveness to others. To cover up our disobedience we often use the shallow statement, "I forgive her—I just don't want to have anything to do with her again." Just think, however, how you would feel if God said to you, "I forgive you; I just don't want to have anything to do with you again"?

Praise God that he never says this! Instead, he forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in exactly the same way: "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 3:12-14; see also 1 Cor. 13:5; Psalm 103:12; Isa. 43:25).

One way to imitate God's forgiveness is to make the Four Promises of Forgiveness:

- I will not dwell on this incident.
- I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.
- I will not talk to others about this incident.
- I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

Remember that forgiveness is a spiritual process that you cannot fully accomplish on your own. Therefore, as you seek to forgive others, continually ask God for grace to enable you to imitate his wonderful forgiveness toward you.

## Church Discipline

Church discipline is the process of confronting sin to achieve repentance and restoration. It is also intended to prevent unrestrained sin from spreading to others and protect the honor of Jesus Christ. The informal process of church discipline happens any time a believer confronts another believer about his or her sin and encourages repentance and peacemaking. The formal process of church discipline typically begins when the individual in sin is unwilling to repent over an extended period of time, after having been approached through the initial process Jesus outlines in Matthew 18:15-17 and that is outlined above. Therefore, most formal church discipline is not as much about the sin as it is about the hard-hearted unwillingness to repent for sin.

The process of church discipline concludes when the believer either repents or is formally removed by the elders from participating in the church. In extreme cases, the elders are given authority to handle church discipline in a public manner. Additionally, those who intentionally stir up divisions in the church should be dealt with and disciplined with greater swiftness. Church discipline is never fun, it's a heart-breaking process that is carried out when necessary to protect the health of Garden City Church and the honor of our Savior.

Scripture: Galatians 6:1; James 5:19–20; Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Corinthians 5:1–7; Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10

**Action Question:**

Do you have any conflicts inside the church or outside the church that you need to resolve and reconcile?

### 3. Financial Stewardship

**Statement:** The Bible has a lot to say about money—about how we make money, steward money, spend money, and give away money. By becoming a member at Garden City Church you are affirming the biblical call to be a good steward of your financial resources, which includes giving generously to support the ministry of our church. At Garden City we want our members to be wise and generous stewards—to wisely save and spend money, and to give generously, cheerfully, and regularly to fund the mission of Garden City as a response to the generosity Jesus has shown us.<sup>6</sup>

At Garden City we don't talk about "tithing," we instead talk about "giving," "generosity," and "stewardship." Most people know that the Old Testament required God's people give a 10% tithe. In actuality, when you add up all of the tithes and giving God described in the Old Testament, it was more like giving away 23% of your income.

We don't prescribe how much money you ought to give to Garden City, we instead ask and expect you to be a generous steward of what God has given you and to give in line with the biblical principles listed below, particularly the call to give generously, cheerfully, and regularly. Your generosity is vital to the health of Garden City Church and to your own discipleship. What follows is a summary of Biblical principles about financial stewardship. Prayerfully read and reflect on these principles (look up the corresponding reference if you would like to dig a little deeper):

- Everything in heaven and on earth belongs to God (1 Chronicles 29:11, 16; Psalm 24:1-2; 50:10-12; 89:11).
- God entrusts creation as a stewardship to mankind beginning with Adam (Genesis 1:28, 2:15).
- Giving is an act of worship (Genesis 14:20, 28:22).
- Giving is an act of grace (2 Cor. 8:6-7), and a response to grace.
- Jesus uses parables to illustrate stewardship truths, paralleling his disciples to managers of a household.

**As disciples of Jesus, we:**

- Serve God, not money (Luke 16:1-15).
- Give inconspicuously, not publicly; our motive is key (Matthew 6:1-14).
- Invest in heavenly treasure, not earthly treasure (Matthew 6:19-24).
- Are provided for by God (Matthew 6:25-34).
- Give in proportion to what we have (Mark 12:41-44).
- Opt for giving over receiving (Acts 20:35).

<sup>6</sup> See *Money Matters in the Church* by Aubrey Malphurs and Steve Stroope (2007: Baker Books), particularly Appendix A: A Theology of Financial Stewardship.

- May receive financial support (Luke 8:1-3).

**Paul teaches us to give:**

- Generously (2 Cor. 8:2-4; 9:6).
- Regularly/systematically (1 Cor. 16:2).
- Proportionately (1 Cor. 16:2, 2 Cor. 8:11-12).
- Sacrificially (2 Cor. 8:3-5).
- Willingly (2 Cor. 8:11-12).
- Voluntarily (2 Cor. 9:7).
- Cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7).
- Eagerly (2 Cor. 8:10-11; 9:2).
- Enthusiastically (2 Cor. 9:2).
- Excellently (2 Cor. 8:7).
- Strategically (2 Cor. 9:12-15).
- Scrupulously (1 Cor. 16:3-4; 2 Cor. 8:18-21).

**Paul teaches that we are to give:**

- A proportional amount (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:11-12).
- A generous amount (2 Cor. 8:2-3; 9:5-6, 11).
- A heartfelt amount (2 Cor. 9:7).
- A sacrificial amount (2 Cor. 8:3).

**Paul teaches us the benefits of good giving:**

- God's generous blessing (2 Cor. 9:6-11).
- The supply of people's needs (2 Cor. 9:12a).
- Praise to God (2 Cor. 9:12b-15).

**Big Picture**

God is a generous and gracious God who supplies every need we have. What we have has been given to us to steward, and we get to respond to God's generosity by managing our finances well and giving generously to fund what God has called us to be and do as a church.

**Action Question:**

Is your current giving at Garden City in line with the above principles? Are there any adjustments you need to make?

**\*Note: There are five ways you can give financially to Garden City:**

### SUNDAYS:

Place your donation in the offering box or plate during our Sunday Service.

### ONLINE:

Give by Debit, Credit, or Bank Account: You can create a recurring gift; you can opt to cover your processing fee.

Credit/Debit Card: 2.15% + 30¢ per gift. Bank transfer: 30¢ per gift

Click [here](#) to give online.

### MAIL:

Make checks payable to Garden City Church. Mail your cash or checks to our address: 2010 El Camino Real #763 Santa Clara, CA 95050. No processing fee

### STOCK:

Transfer stock to our Charles Schwab Account: 9544-8111 DTC Code: 0164 Please email our [bookkeeper](#) to notify us if you have donated stock.

### CRYPTO:

We can now receive crypto giving! Give [here](#).

## OPEN-HANDED ISSUES

There are a variety of other doctrinal and philosophical issues that Garden City Church intentionally does not take a formal position on. These are issues that we would consider “open-handed,” meaning that while individuals within our leadership and church may have convictions about them, they are secondary issues and freedom should be given within our church to believe differently as long as the beliefs remain within the spectrum of biblical Christianity.

Some open-handed issues are listed below as well as a clarifying statement to ensure that we are clear about what we would not consider to be within the spectrum of biblical Christianity.

### Spiritual Gifts

While we believe “spiritual gifts” to be an open-handed issue, we do not believe that the gift of tongues (or any other individual spiritual gift) is required as an evidence of salvation. We believe the Holy Spirit is alive and active today just as he was in the first century church, but what exactly that is to look like we don’t hold a position on.

### End Times

While we believe “end times” to be an open-handed issue (the exact time and way in which Jesus will return), we do not believe that Jesus has already returned. We eagerly anticipate his future coming.

### Creation

While we believe “creation” to be an open-handed issue (the exact nature of God’s creation of the universe), we do not believe in atheistic or naturalistic evolution.

## LEADERS COVENANT PROMISE

With the help of the Holy Spirit, Garden City Church elders and deacons covenant:

### To Be Quaified

We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures, and will live exemplary lives while joining with you to fulfill the duties of a church member.

(1 Tim. 3:1-13, 4:12, 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Cor. 11; Philip. 3:17)

### To Care

We covenant to lovingly care for you and seek your growth in Christ.

(Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12)

### To Teach

We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures and that this teaching will span the whole counsel of God's Word.

(Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Acts 20:27-28)

### To Pray

We covenant to pray for you regularly and help you in times of need as your needs are made known.

(Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35; James 2:14-17, 5:14)

### To Protect

We covenant to protect the church by exercising church discipline when necessary, and maintaining doctrinal purity in the church.

(Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal.6:1)

### To Guide

We covenant to guide the church by seeking God's will for our church family to the best of our ability through the study of the Scriptures and following the Spirit.

(Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

## MEMBERS COVENANT PROMISE

Having confessed to being a baptized Christian (or intending to “go public” with my faith and get baptized at the next Baptism Sunday), being in full alignment with Garden City’s mission, core values/behaviors, doctrine, and philosophy of ministry; and having studied the Membership Handbook, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I covenant:

### To Take Ownership of Our Mission & Play My Part in Advancing Our Mission:

#### “MAKING DISCIPLES TO IMPACT OUR CITY FOR JESUS”

#### To The Gospel

- I will enjoy grace and find my identity in Jesus’ work for me, not my work for him.
- I will follow and walk closely with Jesus, knowing that Jesus has adventurous next steps for me to take with him. I will listen to God and obey God, often asking myself two questions: What is God saying to me? What’s my next step? I will repent of my tendency to follow inferior “gods.”
- I will grow my relationship with God through regularly being present to God, listening to God (reading God’s Word), and talking to God in prayer.

#### To Community

- I will live life in community rather than in isolation. I will gather with my church family on Sundays, in Life Groups, and in friendships. I will belong to this community and help build and bring people into this community.
- I will preserve unity in the church and follow biblical procedures of peacemaking when conflict arises. I will pray for our church’s leaders, follow our church’s leaders, and submit myself to church discipline if the need should ever arise.
- I will have friendly relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ from other churches, but I will not hold membership to another church or consistently attend, serve, or lead in another church family.

#### To Vocation

- I will use my unique gifts and calling to help other people flourish, impact our city, and impact eternity. I will enjoy relationships with non-Christian friends who I’m seeking to know, love, disciple, and bring into our community.
- I will give generously, regularly, and cheerfully to support the mission of Garden City.
- I will have fun! It’s fun to be a Christian.

I will take responsibility to notify the Garden City Church leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, or if I have any concerns regarding Garden City Church.

APPENDIX 1: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOSPEL AND RELIGION<sup>7</sup>

RELIGION	GOSPEL
"I obey, therefore, I'm accepted."	"I'm accepted, therefore, I obey."
Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.	Motivation is based on grateful joy.
I obey God in order to get things from God.	I obey God to get God – to delight in and resemble Him.
When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.	When circumstances in my life go wrong I struggle, but I know all my punishment fell on Jesus and that while God may allow this for my training, he will exercise his fatherly love within my trial.
When I am criticized I am furious or devastated because it is critical that I think of myself as a "good person." Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.	When I am criticized I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." My identity is not built on my record or performance, but on God's love for me in Christ.
My prayer life consists largely of petition, and it only heats up when I am in a time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of the environment.	My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose in prayer is fellowship with God.
My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to failing people. If and when I am not living up to my standards, I feel humble but not confident; I feel like a failure.	My self-view is not based on my moral achievement. In Christ I am simul iustus et peccator – simultaneously sinful and lost, yet accepted in Christ. I am so bad that he had to die for me, and I am so loved that he was glad to die for me. This leads me to deep humility and confidence at the same time.
My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work or how moral I am, and so I must look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral.	My identity and self-worth are centered on The One who died for me. I am saved by sheer grace so that I can't look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. Only by grace I am what I am.

<sup>7</sup>Tim Keller's *Gospel in Life* curriculum



## APPENDIX 2: THAT IDOL THAT YOU LOVE, IT DOESN'T LOVE YOU BACK

Everyone has to live for something and if that something isn't the one true God, it will be a false God – an idol. An idol is anything more important to you than God. Therefore, you can turn even very good things into idols. You can turn a good thing like family, success, acceptance, money, your plans, etc. into a god thing – into something you worship and place at the center of your life. This is what sin is; sin is building your life and meaning on anything, even a good thing, other than God.

Do you know the idols you're prone to worship? At Garden City we talk about four root idols that we tend to attach our lives to:

### Control

You know you have a control idol if your greatest nightmare is uncertainty.

### Approval

You know you have an approval idol if your greatest nightmare is rejection.

### Comfort

You know you have a comfort idol if your greatest nightmare is stress/demands.

### Power

You know you have a power idol if your greatest nightmare is humiliation.

Here's what you need to know about your idol: That idol that you love, it doesn't love you back. False gods don't love you. Idols don't keep their promises. Anything you worship and build your life on other than God will suck the life out of you and ultimately destroy you.

A relationship with Jesus starts when you identify and turn from your idols. Notice what Jesus was always doing with people during his ministry: he was constantly identifying and challenging people's idols, calling them to turn from their false objects of worship in order to follow and worship him.

We're convinced that the reason there is so much shallow Christianity in our culture is because many people never replace the idolatry in their lives with Jesus, but instead simply bring in Jesus as an "add on" to their life, keeping their idolatry firmly in the center.

Americans think freedom is found in casting off all restraint and being masters of our own lives. What we are blind to is the reality that everybody has a master. We all worship something and whatever we worship is our master. Idols make bad masters. They enslave. Until you identify the idols in your life you will feel enslaved, tired, and unhappy and you won't know why. You will feel this way until you discover the only master who can truly set you free: Jesus. Jesus is the one master who will love you even when you fail him. Your idols don't do that. Jesus is the one master who loved you when you were at your worst and who reigns over your life with perfect wisdom, power, and goodness. He's the one master you can trust. Only he can give you freedom.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

## APPENDIX 3: HOW TO LEAVE A CHURCH WELL

You may be joining Garden City from another church in which you were either a member or heavily involved. In addition, the time may come when it's necessary for you to leave Garden City Church to join a community elsewhere. Because we value commitment and investment in the church, we believe strongly that the transition from one church to another is a significant event. However, in our experience, few people really do this well, which often leads to hurt feelings, misunderstandings, unmet expectations, and a lack of unity in the overall body of Christ that dishonors Jesus.

We have compiled the five steps below in order to help you walk through the transition process well for the sake of your own health and the health of the body.

### 1. Have a good reason for leaving.

Before you go, evaluate whether your reasons are good, legitimate, and honoring to God. The reasons that people leave churches are many. Some are good, some are bad, and many are hard to discern. Check your pride in the decision. Ask yourself whether you are running from conflict or reacting to unrealistic expectations. If your reasons are good, go. If not, stay. If you are unsure, it would be wise to seek good counsel from godly friends or church leaders who can help you think through the process.

### 2. Communicate your decision to leave with the appropriate leaders.

As an active part of the church, leaders will need to know you're leaving. Communicate that you are leaving to your Life Group leader. If you are serving, communicate it to your ministry team leader. If you are connected to a pastor/elder, communicate your decision to them. Personal communication is preferable to written communication, but make sure you communicate.

### 3. Tell these leaders the truth about why you're leaving.

If you have legitimate reasons to leave then you have nothing to hide or worry about. If the reasons for leaving will sting church leadership, deliver it in the spirit of Proverbs 27:6, "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." Scripture commands us to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), which means you shouldn't couch the real, sometimes difficult reasons behind a bunch of spiritualized nonsense. God may use your reasons for leaving to help the church or its leaders. "Exit Interviews" can be immensely helpful to leadership, who are accountable to receive truth with humility. Whatever you do, don't just leave without telling your leaders.

### 4. Appropriately transition or conclude your ministry commitments.

If you've been an active part of ministry, your role will need to be transitioned. Hopefully you've been training and developing somebody to take your place anyway. But if you haven't, give your leaders an appropriate time to find others to serve in your capacity. This period shouldn't drag on, but you also should not just drop the ball on the people you've been committed to.

## 5. Leave graciously.

Ray Pritchard writes:

“[Leaving] graciously means you refuse to speak evil of those who remain in the church. Look forward, not backward. Focus on your new church, not your old one. Think carefully before you speak about your former congregation. Don’t say anything that could be remotely construed as criticism. Even casual comments could stir up needless controversy. Let the Golden Rule guide all your comments, public and private.”

### Conclusion

If you’ve read this material and realize that you didn’t leave a church well in the past, it might be wise to circle back to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. If you have gossiped or stirred up division, you should make it right, apologizing not only to the leaders of that church, but also to the people to whom you gossiped. In the end, remember that Jesus loves the church you’re leaving and the one you’re going to — his blood was shed for both. Both churches are part of his bride. Do his bride the honor of leaving well.

## APPENDIX 4: TWO KEY RESOURCES

Below are two key resources that, as a member of our church, we recommend you read. These books are deeply shaping the DNA of Garden City.

### 1. The Bible

We want you always reading the Bible. We love this book! At Garden City our preachers preach from and our leaders lead from the ESV (English Standard Version) translation because we believe it is the best translation for both in-depth study and devotional warmth. We highly recommend either the ESV Study Bible or the ESV Gospel Transformation Bible for going deeper in your study. We have also found The Jesus Storybook Bible to be a very helpful overview of the biblical story for all kinds of people: children, adults, new believers, skeptics, etc.

### 2. Our Discipleship Culture Guidebook

One of our recommended discipleship books is our Discipleship Culture Guidebook. This book teaches the core habits that, if we believed them and did them, would transform our lives, church, and city. Find the digital copy of the Discipleship Culture Guidebook [here](#), or ask your Life Group leader for a hard copy.

The following books are supplementary readings which are recommended in the Guidebook:

#### a. **Resolving Everyday Conflict, by Ken Sande**

We want you to read this book because conflict is inevitable in your life and in our church and we want you equipped to resolve conflict in a biblical manner.

#### b. **On Church Leadership, by Mark Driscoll\***

This book summarizes how our church is governed and led by elders, deacons, and members. We don't adhere to every single detail in this book, but most of what is said here reflects how Garden City operates.

\*While we recognize that Mark has had some significant character and leadership failures, we still think the content of this particular book is very helpful.

#### c. **Every Good Endeavor, by Tim Keller**

We want you to read this book because it will help you think more deeply about how to do your work and pursue your vocation in Silicon Valley.

We recommend you also check out our website where you'll find an expanded list of [important books](#) that are shaping the Garden City DNA.

