



Partnership Information Booklet

January 2022

WHAT PARTNERSHIP MEANS

At Grace Church Brockley (GCB) we believe that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ brings people into relationship with God and with one another. The moment a person acknowledges Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour they receive forgiveness and a relationship with God. They also become partners with Him in the magnificent work of the gospel. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ also brings us into relationship with other partners or Christians. The weekly gathering together of gospel partners in a geographical location is what we call '*church*'.

God's intention is that this partnership is with like-minded Christians who share the same vision, which is for God to be glorified as more people respond rightly to Jesus, thus growing this partnership. For this reason, our vision at GCB is '*partnering together to know Jesus and make him known*'. We at GCB invite you to make your partnership with the Lord, and therefore with us, more official.

It is important to note, however, that this booklet does not in any way affect your relationship or partnership with the Lord; it is simply designed to outline what GCB stands for as a church family, what you can expect of us and what we ask of you. It is also very much intended to stimulate any questions you might have of us before making the decision whether it would be appropriate for you to become a partner with us at GCB.

Partnership is a deep, on-going commitment to the gospel of God and therefore to a particular local expression of His church, the body of Jesus Christ. It is therefore not something to be entered into lightly.

WHY PARTNERSHIP?

There are at least three main reasons for having formal partnership (membership) in a church like GCB:

1. The term partnership reminds us of participation rather than passivity and we want each person in our church family to be a player rather than simply a spectator. The concept of every believer participating in the life of a local church is implicit throughout the New Testament (NT) (Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, Philippians 1:27, Hebrews 10:25, 1 Peter 2:5) and partnership is a core term used to describe what Christians do together (Philippians 1:5, 1:7, 4:14).
2. Formal partnership is valuable to all in the church family as we look to stand together. It is particularly helpful to the leaders of GCB as they seek to fulfil their biblical task of shepherding and pastoring (Acts 20:25-31, 1 Peter 5:1-4). Although we are very committed to reaching the unchurched with the good news of Jesus Christ, it is helpful to be able to identify those who have, in effect, asked to come under our pastoral responsibility and care and who can also be counted upon to help build and sustain the church family at GCB.
3. Formal partnership is also valuable to the individual (Philippians 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15, Hebrews 13:7). In a culture where commitment is no longer highly valued, formal partnership helps to move us from a vague cloud of good intentions into the clear light of a more concrete commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and his people in a specific community, place and time.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Grace Church Brockley is an independent, protestant, reformed, evangelical church committed to the Bible as the Word of God (*if you would like more detailed information about what this means we would be happy to provide it*). Therefore, the basis of all our doctrine and teaching is the fundamental truths revealed in the 66 books of Scripture and as contained in the historic orthodox creeds of the Christian church for example the Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, etc.

Historically we would trace our theological roots back to the reformation in England in the 16th century and as spelt out in the various orthodox articles of religious belief that came out of that era.

All senior leaders at GCB and other council members are required to subscribe to our statement of faith (which can be found on our website at www.gracechurchbrockley.org) in its plain and clear meaning and without reservation. Those in the church family are asked to adhere to GCB's position on these primary matters of faith and to make every effort not to be divisive over secondary matters.

GRACE CHURCH BROCKLEY DISTINCTIVES!

Grace Church Brockley had its first official Sunday meeting on 29 April 2012. Our aim then, as now, has been to know Jesus Christ more intimately ourselves, while also seeking to help others come to know him personally for themselves. This has led us as a church family to adopt the following vision statement:

OUR VISION (Or long-term objective):

'Partnering together to know Jesus and make him known'

OUR VISION GOALS (Or how we aim to fulfil our vision in the short to medium term):

REACHING OUT with the gospel (evangelism)

BUILDING UP with the gospel (spiritual growth/discipleship)

SENDING OUT with the gospel (mission)

WHAT DOES A PARTNER AT GCB LOOK LIKE?

a. One who strives to be a prayer warrior

Our monthly prayer gathering is the most important meeting of the month. Prayer is one of the main ways we demonstrate our trust in, and dependence upon, our heavenly Father. For this reason we close down all our small groups during the first week of each month, so we can gather to pray together for the life of our church family. The leaders of GCB desperately need God's help and, therefore, your prayers for the work they do. As a church family we should similarly covet each other's prayers. We would call upon all GCB partners to be regularly attending and prioritising our monthly prayer gatherings and to be regularly in prayer for one another and our Christian witness in south east London.

b. A relationship builder

Christianity is all about relationships: our relationship with the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ and with the unbelieving world around us. The first step to reaching the unchurched people of this world is to build a relationship or friendship. People are far more likely to believe a radical message from someone they consider a friend than from a complete stranger. We want to encourage all partners at GCB to be radically committed to building on all three of these key relationships!

c. One who shares in our verbal witness

A witness in a courtroom simply describes accurately what he or she has seen. As Christian believers that is what we do when we witness to unchurched friends. We share verbally with them what God has done in history in and through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in our own lives, as we describe the difference, he has made to us personally.

d. A person who invites outsiders into our community

Church of course is wherever two or more Christians are gathered together in the name of Jesus. At GCB we aim to provide various activities that we can invite unchurched friends to. Our witness as far as possible, should be rooted in genuine friendships. However, often we underestimate, undervalue or take for granted the impact of introducing as often as possible our unchurched friends to our Christian community.

e. A regular participator in small groups

At GCB we encourage all partners to *regularly* attend our Sunday meetings, small groups and/or 1-2-1 meetings for

the sake of their own spiritual wellbeing. Our small groups, in particular, are a vital part of our church family life, and the primary means whereby we look to make sure we are caring for each other. If you are feeling unloved, uncared for and/or that you don't know people at GCB well, it might be because you have not committed to regularly attending a small group.

f. Someone who loves others by serving them

On the cross, Jesus served us by laying down his life. Becoming His follower means being willing to lay down our lives in service of others. Whether in a small group or a serving team; all partners are called upon to use their time, energies and gifts for the common good. In our selfishly individualistic age, this is going to feel both hard work and countercultural. It will therefore require us to be thoughtful, intentional and willing, especially when inconvenient and costly.

g. A good steward and giver of financial resources

God created everything and owns everything. We therefore encourage all partners to be giving regularly and financially to support the ministry of GCB. This is a key part of our worship as members of God's household, and our duty as partners at GCB. GCB receive no outside income as all expenses (i.e. staff salaries, venue rental, stationary costs, etc.) are paid for by the partners of GCB. In accordance with the NT Scriptures, if we have benefitted from the gospel and specifically the ministry of GCB, we should thoughtfully decide in our heart what to give, and then do so willingly, generously, sacrificially and cheerfully.

WHAT CAN PARTNERS EXPECT OF GCB LEADERS?

- **To be godly in character:** The leaders of GCB pledge to endeavour to meet by the grace of God and to the best of their ability, the criteria laid down for them in the Scriptures (1 Tim.3:1-13, 5:17-22, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Pet.5:1-4) which is to be godly in character. Also as they study Scriptures and seek to walk in step with God the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28, 1 Pet.5:1-4) they also pledge to seek, as best they can, only what is good for the church community.
- **To be seekers after your spiritual wellbeing:** The leaders of GCB pledge between them, to care for each church partner and to seek their growth in maturity as a disciple of Jesus Christ, by equipping them for works of service and also praying for them, particularly when sick or in need (Eph.4:11-13, Col.1:28, James 5:14).
- **To be providers of faithful teaching:** The leaders of GCB pledge, whether directly or indirectly, to provide teaching, counsel and examples that are faithful to the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28, Phil.3:17, 1 Tim.5:17-18); and to guard and protect the church family as best they can against false teaching (Acts 20:28-31).
- **To lovingly carry out church discipline:** The leaders of GCB pledge to exercise church discipline as appropriate and with a single-minded devotion to the spiritual wellbeing of all in the church family (Matt.18:15-20, 1 Cor.5, Gal.6:1-2, Titus 3:9-11).

- **To lead by serving:** The leaders of GCB pledge to strive to be those who seek not to be served but rather to lay down their lives in service of others, motivated by love, humility and the example of the Lord Jesus Christ himself (Mark 10:45, Phil 2:1-8).

BECOMING A PARTNER

If after thoughtful prayer and having carefully read this booklet you would like to become a partner at GCB, then we would recommend you take the following steps:

- 1. Ask your fellowship group leader or a church council member, for the form you need to fill out as the first step in becoming a partner at GCB.*
- 2. Having filled out this form we would encourage you to have a chat with a member of the church council, preferably one of the elders. This step may seem a little scary, but its purpose is to build relationship, to help us see where we can help you and to answer any questions you might have. We also want to make sure we give you a clear understanding of what GCB is about and what partnership might mean and look like for you specifically. Also, people tend to process information better when they discuss an issue rather than simply read about it. This will hopefully help you to decide whether partnership is appropriate for you at this time.*
- 3. The final step of joining the partnership at GCB would involve us formally welcoming you at one of our public gatherings, thus giving GCB the chance to welcome you corporately. Your name would also be entered onto the church partnership roll.*