

Core Values of Parkgate Community Church

All people matter to God – We are convinced that no human being is an accident. God created each and every one of us. In the same way, God offers us a relationship where we become aware of how much He knows and loves us and where we learn to know and love Him in return. The Bible is clear that there are no exceptions or loopholes in this. While people can choose to reject God's offer of relationship, we cannot change His fundamental decision to always leave the invitation open to us. **So, all people, no matter who they are, where they've been or what they've done matter to God.** He loves them completely and desperately desires for them to know Him through His Son Jesus and be a part of His family. The Holy Spirit is always active to urge people into that relationship.

A relationship with Jesus Christ is a spiritual journey – God sent Jesus Christ to the earth to teach the principles of His Kingdom, to model them perfectly, to invite people to be a part of God's family and to suffer and die on our behalf so that we can accept that invitation. Because Jesus rose from the dead that first Easter Sunday we can know Him in a real way today. We all come to know Jesus Christ from a variety of places. Some people grow up in the church and accept Jesus as their Forgiver and Leader as a child. Others discover Him after realizing that their life has no purpose or meaning apart from Him. Still others find Him through an experience with other Christians in a loving community. There are many pathways that lead to the same destination – where we realize our need for God and accept Jesus Christ as our Forgiver and Leader. Along with acceptance of Jesus, we confess our sin and need for God as well as our belief in Jesus' power to forgive us and make us new.

Once one comes to accepting Jesus, the journey doesn't end, however. It only takes on a new dimension. Over time we begin to see the world differently than we did before – through the eyes of Jesus. The Holy Spirit works on our hearts and minds to transform us from the people we once were to the people God created us to be. This is a process, a journey of discovery, where we come to know and love God more through Jesus Christ each and every day.

Are there setbacks? Yes, sometimes. Do we still do things that displease God or that don't reflect Jesus' character and teachings? Unfortunately, yes again. But we are always on a journey of experiencing newer and greater levels of God's love and grace for us and learning how to stretch and share that with others. **We come to God as we are, but we don't stay that way.**

God designed us for authentic community – We were never created to be alone. God created us to live together in loving relationships that honor Him and build each other up. We all crave relationships where people really know us for who we are and love us unconditionally. We all want to be a part of a community that is bigger than just us where we know that loving support is offered, friendships are made and deepened, and life doesn't just revolve around us, but genuinely seeks to love and serve others. That is what God calls the Church to be and what we always seek emulate.

Belonging to a church is more than being part of a crowd on Sunday morning. It's even more than participating in a host of activities. **Church, at its best, is a community of friends who live**

life together and seek to reflect the character and teachings of Jesus to each other and to the world. So, although we regularly meet in a crowd, we know that God really calls us to be in friendships of mutual trust, love, and support with each other. Since this is unlikely in a crowd, we are convinced it works best in smaller Community Groups where people can authentically share their lives together, grow spiritually together, and truly become a community of friends. Only then can people be real with one another and experience authentic community as God designed.

God wants us to worship together – We believe that God calls us to live a life of thanksgiving and praise. Since God has given us all so much, we should be a thankful people. And since God is so great and His work in our lives so real, we should praise Him. That is why Christians worship God. Our worship can be the greatest evidence to others that God is real and active in the world today. That's why it's so important to worship together. We draw encouragement and strength from one another. We grow from sound biblical teaching and from hearing the stories of God's work in the lives of people. And, worship not only matters to Christians, it matters to the world. **As we worship together we are confessing to the world that God is relevant and real and He wants to be a part of everyone's life.**

Everyone in God's family partners in His work – God didn't create some people to be first class members of His family, while relegating others to second class status. No matter what our background or resume, God created us and gifted us for a purpose. We all have an opportunity to share with others what God has given to us, serving people in Jesus' name. Some of those roles are public and some of those roles are in the background, but all of them are important. **No one is without purpose, gift or a place to serve in God's Kingdom.**

Christians should love as Jesus loves – The essence of God's nature is love and love is the essential characteristic of the Christian life. Christians are called to love God completely and love our neighbor as we would ourselves. And we don't get to choose who our neighbor is! Jesus loved others whether or not it benefited Him or even if they loved Him in return. We are to do the same. **We believe that love is a risk that always changes you and often changes others.**