



Introduction to Redeemer East Harlem

Membership Handbook
2022

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Chapter 1

Our Vision, Mission, + Core Values

VISION

Redeemer East Harlem is a church both in and for East Harlem that seeks to both know and show the love of God in Christ.

MISSION

As a church of Jesus Christ, Redeemer East Harlem seeks to know and show the love of Christ through a movement of the Gospel that brings *personal conversion, spiritual formation, community involvement, mercy and justice*, and avenues for cultural, racial, and socioeconomic *unity*.

A. What is the mission + purpose of Redeemer East Harlem (REH)?

As a church, our vision statement is: “*Redeemer East Harlem is a church both in and for East Harlem that seeks to both know and show the love of God in Christ.*”

We are not just a church located *in* East Harlem, but rather are a church *for* East Harlem. This means we desire to seek the peace and prosperity of *this* neighborhood. We want to engage the brokenness and struggles of the neighborhood, while also enjoying its beauty and vibrancy.

Additionally, we are a church that seeks to *know* the love of Christ, which propels us to *show* that love to others. One without the other ultimately misses the beauty of Jesus. *Knowing* the love of Christ is to be transformed by the Gospel. *Showing* the love of Christ is being so shaped by the Gospel that our whole lives are changed and bear witness to the love we have been shown.

B. What are Redeemer East Harlem’s Core Values?

We are driven by our values—all of which derive from the Gospel.

What is the gospel? The gospel is the good news of God’s kingdom entering into our reality. Jesus lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died. The gospel is not just the ABCs of Christianity—it is the A-Z of Christianity. It is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter God’s kingdom, but the way we make any and all progress in the kingdom. We are not justified by the gospel and then sanctified by obedience; the gospel is the way we grow (Galatians 3:1-3) and are renewed (Colossians 1:6). The gospel is not about going from being irreligious to being religious, it’s about realizing that our reasons for both religion and irreligion are essentially the same and fundamentally wrong.

Core Values

With the Gospel as our foundation, and our vision and mission the goal, how then will Redeemer East Harlem accomplish this Gospel-oriented vision? To understand how we get there, we must consider our 5 core values.¹

1. *Personal Conversion:* We are a church that cares about people personally knowing the love of God in Jesus Christ. We want to connect people to God so that their whole lives might be converted and changed by the gospel.
2. *Spiritual Formation:* We are a church that desires to see people grow in their relationship with God and others through the engagement of spiritual practices, relationships, and callings so that they might discover how the Gospel impacts all areas of life.

¹ For more on our core values, check out our sermon series, “Who Are We?” at www.reh.nyc or on our podcast (search Redeemer East Harlem on all major podcast platforms)

3. *Community Involvement*: We are a church that seeks to empower people to show the love of God by being faithfully present in East Harlem and engaged with the specific needs and concerns of the neighborhood.
4. *Mercy And Justice*: We are a church concerned with addressing both the tangible needs and struggles of our neighbors (mercy) and the reasons for inequities (justice).
5. *Unity*: We are a church that believes God's love breaks down racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural barriers and brings unity through the power of the Gospel.

(We will discuss our denomination more, but as a church in the Presbyterian Church in America, we hold to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechism as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures)

C. What is Redeemer East Harlem's Basic Strategy?

Knowing the love of Christ through...

1. *Worship*. Our worship services are designed to glorify God, build up those who believe, challenge and help those who doubt or seek, and call individuals to trust in the work of Jesus.
2. *Community Groups*. REH CGs are designed to help congregants grow in their relationship with God and others. Each week we consider more deeply how to live in response to the Gospel through prayer, study, and practical application.
3. *Ministry*. There are several ministries and ministry teams that help everyone develop relationships as well as believers to relate to one another as a family. This includes ministry to families and children. Additionally, through many of our partner ministries, we encourage congregants to be active in serving our neighborhood.
4. *Classes*. We provide seasonal classes as a way to help congregants grow in their knowledge of Scripture and the Christian life.
5. *Prayer Ministries*. Prayer undergirds all of our ministries and strategies as it makes us reliant upon God's grace. As a result, in prayer, we gather to seek God's presence and praise him for what he has done.

Showing the love of Christ by...

1. *Embracing the brokenness*. This includes partnering with organizations that seek to love and serve the poor, oppressed, vulnerable, and marginalized in our community. Additionally, East Harlem is a complex neighborhood. Especially for those who are new, realizing one's impact on the neighborhood is vital to loving it well.²
2. *Embracing the beauty*. This includes enjoying and investing in the community by seeing its beauty. Spending time and money in the community promotes a greater love for the community.

² See article by Pastor Justin Adour called, "Gentrification and Church Planting"

3. *Embracing those who do not believe.* This includes evangelism and mission. We don't want to simply grow our own church, but to spread the gospel across our neighborhood and beyond.
4. *Embracing collaboration:* As a church, we are joining what God has already been doing for generations. As a result, we want to show Christ's love in how we work with other churches in organizations in the neighborhood.

Chapter 2

Church Community + Membership

A. What Does Membership in the Church Community Mean?

Membership historically has been a commitment to a particular vision and organization. To be a member of REH is to make a public promise to live according to the Word and to support the work of the congregation. In other words, it means to be part of the *family*. In the Bible, this is called a “covenant.”

Every believer is part of the church as *organism* (the Spiritual Body of Christ), but only by a public promise can you be part of the church as an *organization*, as gathered. A public promise, or covenant, is the basis for all society, according to the Bible: marriage, employment, citizenship, adoption, etc. are all relationships of accountability.

Membership in a church is not like membership in a social club or other organizations. Most organizations see their members as consumers, the ones whom the organization serves. The Church of Christ is a completely different community—membership means **ministry** and **service**, it means going from being a consumer to becoming a provider of God’s love and care to others. At REH, we take seriously that we are a church not for ourselves, but for others.

To understand REH, it is helpful to understand church membership.

B. Why Formal Membership in a Church?

Of course, many of the benefits of a vital congregation are available to anyone who becomes involved, whether they are members or not. But there is a rationale for formal membership.³

Scripture Indicates Church Membership in New Testament Times

Church in the New Testament usually meant the specific local church like that at Ephesus or Corinth. Did people actually join local churches formally, or was it an informal association?

1. *The biblical metaphors used to describe local churches*
 - a. Flock, temple, body, and household are used specifically of local churches (Acts 20, Ephesians 2, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Timothy 3). Each of these metaphors has a clear distinction of who is part of the church, and who isn’t.
2. *The meaning of “the whole church”*
 - a. In 1 Corinthians 14:23, Paul says, “If the whole church comes together in one place...” How would the leaders know if the “whole church” were there if no formal relationship was established?
3. *Instructions for pastoral oversight and spiritual leadership*
 - a. Pastors/overseers/shepherds were to care for “all the flock” (Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3, Acts 20, Philippians 1:1, Titus 1). Leaders of citywide churches must have had some listing of believers. Since leaders were accountable for the souls of the flock under their

³ Adapted from Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines Within the Church*, 1996.

care (Hebrews 13:17), they must have had some commitment to care.

4. *Meaning of the word “join”*

- a. After the fiery end of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:13, no non-Christians “dared join them (the church), but the people esteemed them highly.” The Greek word for join has strong connotations of commitment. The same word is used to speak of sexual relationships (1 Corinthians 6:16) and joining to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:17).

5. *Instructions for church discipline*

- a. Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5 talk about putting a person out of the church (*remove* in NASB, *expel* in NIV) and treating him like an unbeliever. Since unbelievers were welcome at worship, removal must have indicated a distinct formal association.

Some Benefits of Joining a Church

1. You have the benefit of receiving the care of, and being accountable to, spiritual leaders.
2. You have the benefit of shaping the ministry of the congregation. Members choose officers and guide the direction of the congregation. Officers are elected (Acts 6:1-6) by “the people.” Formal membership entitles you to voting rights within the government of our church. While congregational meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend, only members may pass resolutions, vote for changes to the by-laws, or nominate and elect the officers. Additionally, members officially call the pastors to the work of the church.
3. It is a way to identify with Christ and His people publicly (Mark 8:38). You stop being an independent Christian (Matthew 18:15-17, Hebrews 13:17).
4. Informal membership privileges may include priority in pastoral and private counseling, church ceremonies such as marriage, and opportunities to lead church ministries or serve as church officers. Members may baptize their infant children into the covenant family as well.

C. What are the Formal Membership Promises?

Redeemer East Harlem belongs to a wider family—the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), a denomination with roots in the Reformation and the Calvinist tradition (more on that later).

Redeemer members affirm the following promises as a vow unto the Lord:

Doctrinal Promises

You must believe the Gospel.

- Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except through His sovereign mercy?
- Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

Character Promise

You must seek to grow into the likeness of Christ, not through proud self-reliance, but through constant repentance and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

- Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?

Community Promise

Regular involvement in the life and ministry of the congregation.

- Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

Accountability Promise

You hold yourself accountable to the leadership and one another to live up to the above promises and you seek to be a Biblical peacemaker in your relationships.

- Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace?

D. What are the Expectations of Active Membership?

We encourage members to live out their membership in the context of Scripture's expectations for their life as a Christian.

1. *Regular walk with God.* Regular, daily use of the means of grace—Bible reading and prayer—methodically for your own spiritual growth. (Mark 1:35)
2. *Weekly worship with the people of God.* Worship even when you are away from your home congregation. (Hebrews 10:24-25)
3. *Membership in a community.* Being in a Christian community is one of the main ways pastoral care occurs at REH. This can occur outside of organized church groups, but can also happen through our various teams and in our community groups. For your own spiritual growth as well as others, you need to belong to a group. (Ephesians 4:15-16)
4. *Ministry involvement.* Besides attending worship and community groups, each member should find ways to minister to others. Use your gifts! (1 Peter 4:10-11)
5. *Stewardship of finances through tithes and gifts.* (Malachi 3:8-10, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

E. What's the Membership Process?

1. **Intro to Redeemer East Harlem.** You're here! The first step is to attend the Intro to Redeemer East Harlem class.
2. **Membership application and conversation.** When you have decided you want to join the REH family and have attended the Intro to Redeemer East Harlem class, it is time to fill out your membership application and meet up with a church officer. As soon as your application is submitted, we will follow up to schedule this conversation. This gives us an opportunity to get to know you even better, to hear your experience in coming to know God in Jesus Christ, and what is happening in your spiritual life right now. It also gives you another opportunity to ask questions of church leadership.
3. **Session approval.** After the conversation, the elders will meet at their Session meeting (the second Monday of each month) to officially enter the new members into our body.
4. **Public vows.** Following Session approval, you will have the opportunity to stand on stage and publicly affirm these promises in front of the Redeemer East Harlem congregation.
5. **Baptism.** If you have never been baptized, and are making your first public profession of faith, we would be honored to baptize you during the worship service. Let the elder know during your interview and we will schedule your baptism (or for parents, a child baptism). The baptism will take place after you have affirmed the promises of membership.

F. What If I Choose to Not Become a Formal Member?

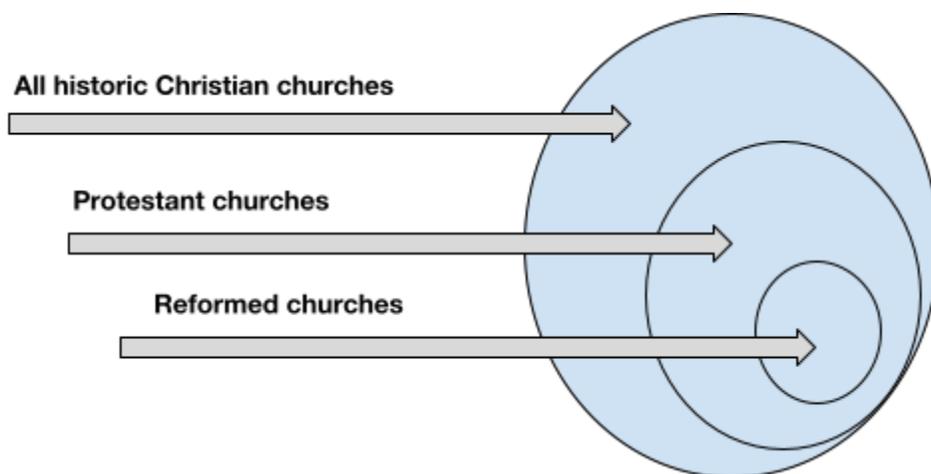
If you decide to stay involved with REH without membership, there will be no effort to pressure you into joining (unless participation in certain ministry teams require it). We encourage you to join our covenant family, but we do not intend to exclude anyone from family activities if they have chosen not to pursue formal membership.

Chapter 3

What Do We Believe? Key Doctrinal Issues

Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except through His sovereign mercy?

Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and you do receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as he is offered in the Gospel?



A. What All Churches Historically Believe

By all churches we mean the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” The faith of the Church is expressed in the words of the Apostle’s Creed:

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and
buried. He descended into hell (death), The third day he arose again from the
dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in
the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic* Church, the communion of saints, the
forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

*(*that is, the true Christian church of all times and places)*

Areas of fundamental agreement between all Christians:

1. **Who is God?**
 - a. Absolutely unique (Exodus 3)
 - b. Incomprehensible yet knowable; both infinite and personal (Job 11:7; Isaiah 40:18; John 17:3; 1 John 5:20)
 - c. Trinity: God is *One* (Deuteronomy 6:4; James 2:19) and God is *Three Persons* (Matthew 28:19; John 5:23; 14:15-26; 16-27; 20:22)
2. **Who is Jesus Christ?**
 - a. Fully God (Mark 2:10; Matthew 28:20; John 5:18; 8:19, 58;)
 - b. Fully Man (John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 2:10-18)

B. What (Protestant) Churches Historically Have Believed

1. **What is the Bible?**
 - a. Revelation—the very words of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:16-21)
 - b. Canon—Scripture alone is our final standard; traditions that conflict with scripture have no authority (Matthew 15:6)

- c. Clear for all believers—understanding, interpretation, application (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- 2. **Who is mankind?**
 - a. Created in God's Image—original and continued glory (Genesis 1:26 - 31)
 - b. Fallen—overcome by guilt and shame (Genesis 3); Sinful—both by *nature* (Mark 7:21-23; Ephesians 2:1-10) and by *choice* (Romans 3:23; 6:23)
- 3. **What does it mean to be saved?**
 - a. *Reconciliation*—answers the sin nature problem
 - i. Though we are sinners, God seeks us out in love (Romans 5:6)
 - ii. Jesus came to rescue us from the sin dilemma (Matthew 1:21; 1 John 4:14)
 - iii. On the cross, Jesus took our place. He became our sin-bearer (1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21)
 - iv. Through Christ's work we are reconciled to God, and have peace with God (Romans 5:1-2; 8:1-2)
 - v. Salvation is freely offered to all—by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - b. *Restoration*—answers the ongoing sin problem
 - i. God enables us to hate our sin and turn away from it (2 Timothy 2:25)
 - ii. He sends His Spirit into our lives to restore us into His image—to make us like Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:18-21)
 - iii. Sanctification is the process of renewal in time; glorification is the finished product (Romans 8:28-29)

C. What Reformed Protestant Churches Historically Believe

In addition to sharing a strong commitment to justification by faith alone, and commitment to the inspiration and authority of Scripture, Reformed Protestant churches have several key distinctives:

1. Commitment to the centrality of the Gospel as Christ's work for us
2. Commitment to God's sovereignty
3. Viewing Scripture through God's promises (covenants)

What did Christ do for us?

The gospel is:

- a. You are more flawed and lost than you ever dared believe, yet,
- b. You can be more accepted and loved than you ever dared hope at the same time because,
- c. Jesus Christ lived and died in your place—Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9).

How does the Gospel differ from religion or irreligion?

Religious	Irreligious	Gospel
<i>Truth without grace.</i>	<i>Grace without truth.</i>	<i>Truth with grace. Grace with truth.</i>
<i>Says or implies that we must obey the truth in order to be saved.</i>	<i>Says or implies that we are accepted by God regardless of what we do.</i>	<i>We are unconditionally accepted by God.</i>
<i>The religious only repent of sins (actions).</i>	<i>The irreligious don't repent at all.</i>	<i>Repentance is turning from self-justification to reliance on Jesus' record for a relationship with God.</i>
<i>Moral and religious people are sorry for their sins, but they see sins as simply the failure to live up to standards by which they are saving themselves.</i>	<i>Irreligious people aren't sorry at all; at most they are sorry for the bad consequences of their sins which go against their ability to enjoy life to the fullest.</i>	<i>Christians realize that both their sins and their best deeds have been ways of avoiding Jesus as savior.</i>
<i>Without a knowledge of Christ's completely satisfying life and death, the knowledge of sin crushes us or moves us to deny and repress it.</i>	<i>Without a knowledge of our extreme sin, the payment of the gospel seems trivial and does not electrify or transform us.</i>	<i>Sin's overwhelming load has been taken by the one who could bear it and we are freed to respond in love. The truth of this transforms the Christian's life.</i>

A Christian is someone who has adopted a whole new system of approach to God. He/She realizes their entire reason for either irreligion or religion has been essentially the same and essentially wrong! Christians realize that both their sins and their best deeds have all really been ways of avoiding Jesus as savior.

De-emphasize or lose one or the other of the below truths, and you fall somewhat into legalism or somewhat into license, and you eliminate the joy and the *power* of the gospel.

Why am I a Christian?

1. **Because God chose you unconditionally—Grace.**

- a. God chooses whom He will save.
- b. His decision is not based on anything we have done good or bad (Romans 9:11-13). He doesn't "foresee the good guys" because there are no good guys.
- c. We are all guilty. (Romans 3:10-12)
- d. If election were based on merit, no one would ever be elect! (Deuteronomy 6:9; 1 Corinthians 1:27; Romans 9:23)
- e. God shows His mercy to people who neither want nor deserve it.

- f. Why did God choose you and me? The answer is a mystery. It was for His own glory, and because in His mercy He was pleased to do so. Not fair? (Ephesians 1:1-14; Romans 9)
2. **Because Christ died for you personally—Grace.**
- a. Christ's atonement is personal. He died for His church (Ephesians 5:25-27). He "laid down His life for His sheep." (John 10:15, 26-29)
3. **Because God made you alive when you were spiritually dead—Grace.**
- a. We have free will, in that we are free to do whatever we desire; however, no one naturally desires to love or obey God. (Romans 3:23; 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14)
- b. We are not sick with sin—we are dead in it (Ephesians 2:1-2)! Our only hope is for Christ to make us alive (*regeneration*), for Him to draw us to himself (John 6:44).
- c. Just as God created the world out of nothing by calling it into being—"Let there be"—so He calls us into life out of death (2 Corinthians 4:5-6).
- d. The ability to repent and place our faith in Christ is a gift (2 Timothy 2:25; Ephesians 2:8-9). God acts first in our salvation—He is its author (Hebrews 2:10; 12:2).
- e. Regeneration (God's action) must come before faith (our response), or faith wouldn't be a gift and our salvation would be ultimately based on our good works.
- f. God's grace is the only reason one person is a Christian and another is not. "For who makes you different than anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7)
4. **Because God wants you forever and will preserve you—Grace.**
- a. God begins our salvation and promises to carry it through to completion, i.e. complete restoration to the image of Christ (Philippians 1:6; John 10:27-30).
- b. Our growth is a matter of cooperation with God's Spirit (Romans 6:11-14; 12:1-2; 13:12-14; Ephesians 6:10-18), but God is the ultimate source of our growth (1 Thessalonians 5:23 -24; Ephesians 2:9; Philippians 2:12-13).
5. **How do I know that God has chosen me?**
- a. John 6:37 says, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away."
- b. We know that those who truly come to Christ (believe in Him) do so because God has made them alive, Christ has died for them, and God has chosen them.

Chapter 4

Christian Lifestyle + Ethics

Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?

A. How do I endeavor to live a Christian Life?

Outline

- 1) If Jesus is who he says he is, do I love what he loves?
- 2) What does he love? (*Written in the Bible*)
- 3) How do I know what in the Bible still applies to me? (*Moral, Civil, Ceremonial Laws*)
- 4) What is the Moral Law?
 - a) 10 Commandments
 - b) Stewardship
 - c) Generosity
 - d) Anything not *Civil* or *Ceremonial*
- 5) If the Moral Law still applies, how do I live that out now?
 - a) Means of Grace
 - i) Bible
 - (1) Application
 - (2) What's God's Word saying me?
 - (3) What are the promises to keep and the commands to obey?
 - (4) Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication (ACTS)
 - ii) Prayer
 - (1) Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication (ACTS)
 - iii) People
 - iv) Church and Sacraments

Christian Lifestyle—A Look at the Ten Commandments

Two truths are expressed in God's law:

- God's law expresses His character: What He is like, what He loves, what He hates.
- Since we are created in His image, we can only find fulfillment in a life of law-keeping. The law expresses what we were both made and redeemed for (Exodus 20:1-2).

Law and Love

Love is blind, and needs law for its eyes. The law shows us how to love God and our neighbor (Matthew 22:34-40; 1 John 5:3). Jesus did not destroy, but *fulfilled* the law; i.e. He so emphasized the positive demands of the law as to *republish* it (Matthew 5:17).

Sinless perfection, or a lifetime of repentance?

The goal is not sinless perfection in this world (which is impossible), but rather a lifetime of genuine repentance and faith in Christ to heal us of sin. What is not important for membership is whether you are struggling with a particular sin or sins, though the church certainly wants to help if you are, since all of us are involved in struggle and need help from time to time. What is important is whether you: 1) have biblical convictions about what God expects from His

people in terms of obedience and disobedience and 2) whether or not you have given in to those areas of temptation and ceased fighting against them.

B. Applying God's Law to Modern Life: Exodus 20:1-17

1. "You shall have no other gods before me." (vs.3) God comes first—nothing else. Not power, pleasure, possessions, relationships, sex, or money. God is to be our chief priority and well as our chief delight. Your goal in life is not personal fulfillment or freedom, but "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."
2. "You shall not make for yourself an idol..." (vs.4) Love God as He has revealed himself. Don't imagine Him to be like yourself, or lower. Worship and serve God only in the way the scriptures teach.
3. "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God..." (vs.7) Be serious about God. Treat His name with reverence and honor Him with you thoughts, and with your language. Realize that His honor is at stake in everything you do. When you encounter heresy (lies about God), guard His reputation by standing up for the truth.
4. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (vs. 8) Use Sunday as day of worship and fellowship. Never do the work of sin, but rest in the righteous life Christ offers you. Treat all time as God's time and find true rest in Him rather than accomplishments.
5. "Honor your father and your mother..." (vs. 12) Treat your parents and all those in authority with proper love and respect.
6. "You shall not murder." (vs. 13) Life is sacred. Don't be a person of malice, cruelty, violence, or revenge. You should struggle for the oppressed – before they are born (abortion), and after (combating homelessness, hunger, poverty, racism, suicide, euthanasia). You should seek to love your neighbor as yourself in all situations.
7. "You shall not commit adultery." (vs. 14) Sex is sacred. You are to honor it as God has created it – an act of intimacy, love, communication, and (sometimes) procreation between a man and a woman within the covenant of marriage. Other expressions of sexuality (various sexual addictions, fantasies about persons to whom you are not married, homosexuality, or fornication/adultery) are forbidden. Christian couples should see sex as a positive command to seek to serve, please, and fully give themselves to one another.
8. "You shall not steal." (vs. 15) "Love to your neighbor requires you to hold sacred not only his person (6th commandment) and his marriage (7th commandment), but also his property and his due." – Martin Luther. You are to be impeccably honest. You shouldn't steal time from your employer, or cheat on your income taxes. You should pay your debts, and use your money for the benefit of the poor,

and the kingdom of God.

9. "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." (vs. 16) Truth is sacred. Be sincere in all your dealings. You are never to gossip, lie, or put a spin to things that distorts reality, or does your neighbor harm. You should always speak the truth in love, and for your neighbor's good. You should be a peacemaker, and always zealous for you neighbor's reputation. Without being naive, always put the best construction on things.
10. You shall not covet..." (vs. 17) Be content. Don't lust for more than you have or for what others have. Don't worry or be anxious, but delight in the love of Christ, and seek His kingdom and righteousness. Be thankful for all God's providence in your life.

C. The Christian as a Steward

Jesus spent nearly one-quarter of His teaching on the place that money has in our heart. We have three roles with regard to money.

1. *A steward investing God's resources.* We are to honor God with our money, recognizing that all of it comes from His hand (1 Chronicles 29:14). A wise steward uses the owner's money for what pleases the owner. We use God's wealth in ways that build His kingdom.
2. *A slave freeing ourselves from the slavery of money.* Money wants to enslave us, to pull us from Christ. It is a competing god (Matthew 6:24) that flows easily to whatever we get meaning from in life. We ought to live simply and avoid excess to set us free; to build our hope and trust in God's love for us.
3. *As brothers and sisters sharing.* Just as Christ poured himself out for our sakes, so we care for one another out of thankfulness (2 Corinthians 8:9). Our use of money is a model of grace and love; we share with all in need, especially other Christians.

D. Biblical Principles of Generosity

Giving must be in significant proportions.

1. *The guideline of the tithe.* In the Old Testament, believers were required to give a tenth of their income to the support of the ministry and the needs of the poor. The New Testament only once specifically mentions the tithe (Luke 11:42), explaining that since we are far more blessed and indebted to God than OT believers, we are to be more generous, not less. Thus the tithe (10%) annual gift of income is a kind of minimum guideline for giving.
2. *The guideline of sacrifice.* Paul says about the Macedonians, "they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability" (2 Corinthians 8:3). That means they gave until it meant a sacrifice in their lifestyle.
3. *The guideline of responsibility.* Christians are also to give "according to their ability" (Acts 11:29). There are seasons to economic life. And there are economic responsibilities to our families and to our debts. In many

cases, good planning over time will be necessary to move our giving into Biblical proportions without renegeing on legal and personal financial obligations.

Giving must be a joyful response to God's grace.

Paul asked for money this way: "I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, He became poor, so that through His poverty you might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:8-9). What a test! Paul says that the difference between moralists (those who think God accepts them for their good works) and Christians (those who know they are sinners saved purely through grace) is that a Christian wants to give as generously as he or she received.

Giving must be systematic and thoughtful.

Paul directed Corinthians to set aside a portion of their wealth each week until he could come and take it to famine victims in Palestine (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). Usually "spontaneous" and unplanned giving, while perhaps joyful is not proportionate. The actual tally of completely spontaneous giving usually shows little sacrifice involved. We must plan. We must allow the church to help with reminders and directions. A way to plan:

- a. *Evaluate your own heart with regard to money.* What do you most enjoy spending money on? What percentage of your income is going to: 1) God's causes (church, Christian ministries), 2) to people in need (Outside your family). How close is it to 10% of your income?

Read Matthew 6:19-34; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:6-15. Do you need to adjust your giving in light of eternal values?

- b. *Evaluate the use of your non-liquid resources: home, time, abilities, etc.*
- c. *Do you have a regular plan of giving?* A rule of thumb for tithing: \$20 per week for each \$10,000 in annual income. Follow these three steps (families do these together):
 - i. Decide what percentage of your income you will give to the Lord's work this year.
 - ii. Ask two questions: Is this a sacrificial figure? On the other hand, is it a responsible figure?
 - iii. Set aside the Lord's portion first whenever the money is received. It is His, not yours.
- d. *Prayerfully distribute the money among Christian causes as you see fit.* Remember—the more you trust God with your material treasure, the more He will entrust you with His spiritual treasure (Luke 16:9-12; 2 Corinthians 9:10-12).

E. Summary: G.I.V.E

NOTES

We often use the following as a summary of our understanding of generosity. You can find more about understanding, as well as responses to common objections at www.reh.nyc/give

Generous + sacrificial: Being generous and sacrificial always requires some kind of lifestyle change, otherwise, it is not generous or sacrificial (Luke 21:1-4, 2 Corinthians 8:2). For some, 10% is literally a financial impossibility (e.g. temporary times of joblessness, severe underemployment, unexpected healthcare bills, etc.); those who cannot commit to 10% in the present can still commit to growing into an offering of (at least) 10%, as the Lord enables. For others, 10% is exactly the right percentage for them to be generous and sacrificial. For others, 10% is not nearly enough as it doesn't fulfill the New Testament imperative of "sacrificial giving" as 10% for them would be "just a drop in the bucket of what they could give."

Intentional + prayerful: Believers should not be haphazard with giving but instead should intentionally sit down with their budget and prayerfully consider how they spend the resources with which God has entrusted them. Then, they will be prepared to determine the amount/percentage they will give.

Voluntary First Fruits: When a believer has committed to sacrificial generosity, they also commit to giving their gift first, not last. That means, not making the gift the last thing given as though it is a "leftover," but instead making it a first priority: automatic. This is the OT concept of the First Fruits, which meant giving God one's "best of the best" gift. One way to do that in modern-day is to commit to automatic, first-fruit offerings. Practically, this could mean setting up a recurring gift that gets automatically sent at the beginning of each month.

Expectation from God: When we've committed to honoring God in our finances, we can expect God will lead us in that commitment. While we do not believe Scripture binds one's conscience to give 100% of one's entire tithe/offering to the local church, Scripture does present a precedent and priority for financially supporting one's own local church. While God is certainly at work outside of the local church, the New Testament teaches the primary way Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) is accomplished is through the establishment and support of the local church (1 Corinthians 9:9-14). A believer is part of God's Kingdom work and one's church is where one worships, receives spiritual feeding, and participates in God's Kingdom work by ministering to others. As a result, believers should invest financially in their local church's work. After ensuring one's church has been supported, a believer should then give elsewhere, as God leads. A popular rule of thumb—though not an obligation—is to give at least 10% to one's own church and then give above and beyond to other ministries as God leads.

Chapter 5

Ministry Involvement + Worship

Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

A. Ministry Involvement at Redeemer East Harlem

What are spiritual gifts?

Because we are a church with a strong desire to make an impact on the city, we are a church that emphasizes involvement in ministry and allows each individual to use their own unique “spiritual gifts.” Redeemer East Harlem believes that each individual was meant to put his or her own set of talents, proclivities, experiences, and background to use for the good of the whole church. (In addition, you will find fulfillment and “meaning in life” when you actively use your spiritual gifts.)

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 says: “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” Spiritual gifts (listed in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4) tend to fall into two categories: Word-based gifts and Deed-based gifts.

Word-based Gifts	Deed-based Gifts
Elders, and others who helped them	Deacons, and others who helped them
Truth emphasis	Mercy emphasis
Imbalance by: Fixing over feeling	Imbalance by: Feeling over fixing

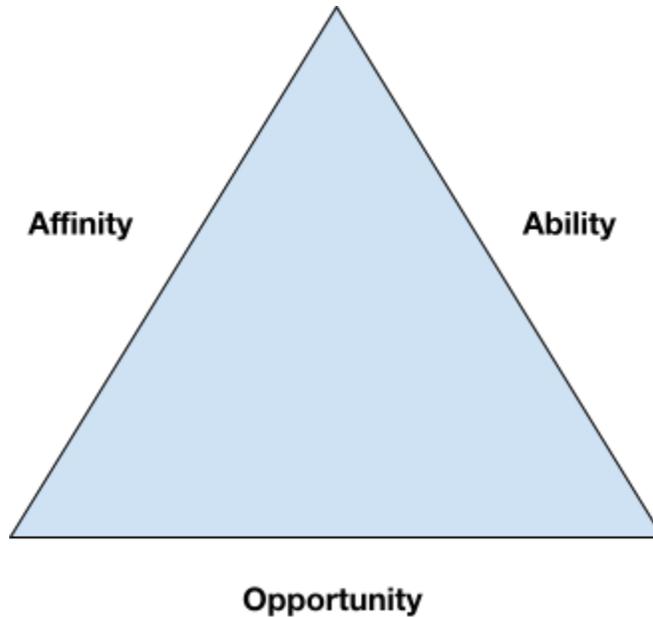
Jesus used all gifts fully and perfectly: *Full of grace and truth.*

So where do I serve best?

We believe that every Christian has talents, spiritual gifts, personality traits, background experiences, and passions that contribute uniquely to the life of our church.

The leaders and staff of Redeemer East Harlem also hope you will become actively involved in our church, in the needs of our city and in the whole world. So prayerfully consider where you can serve the family of God and discover your personal calling.

The best fit is something that blends your affinity (desire), ability (gifts), and opportunity (need).



B. The Purpose and Shape of Worship at Redeemer East Harlem

One of the distinctives of Redeemer of East Harlem is a particular kind of worship. In many ways, we desire our worship service to reflect our core values.

First and foremost, the Gospel, from top to bottom, is on full display. The Gospel is the heart of the Christian faith, and as a result, is all we have to offer both the Christian and non-Christians. As a result, each week our "liturgy" (order of service) tells the Gospel story.

REH Liturgical Arc:

God Invites → *God Pursues* → *God Speaks* → *We Respond* → *God Sends*

- *God Invites*: God invites us to know him as our great purpose in life is to glorify and enjoy him both now and forever. **Within this section:** *Call to Worship, Songs of Praise & Psalms of Adoration, Prayer of Adoration, & the Lord's Prayer.*
- *God Pursues*: Though God calls us to know and worship him, in our sin, we turn away from Him and his law. This sin alienates us from him and affects all aspects of our world. Yet, he pursues us, by faith in Christ forgives us, and hears our prayers for restoration. **Within this section:** *Confession of Sin* (corporate & individual), *Prayers of the People* (prayers for a world marred by sin), *Songs of renewal or lament*, and *Words of Encouragement* (a reminder of God's forgiveness & restoration power)
- *God Speaks*: In his Word, God provides the rule and standard to direct us in how to glorify and enjoy him that we might know and obey Him. In the

sacraments, he gives us a sign and seal of His covenant promises and meets us by his Spirit to refresh and nourish us. **Within this section:** *Preaching of the Word & Sacraments*.

- *We Respond:* As the Holy Spirit works in us through the Word and Sacrament, we respond, by faith, to God's call to live in light of the Gospel of Grace. **Within this section:** *Reflection* (personal response to the Word) and *Song of Response* (corporate response).
- *God Sends:* As the Spirit works in us, he also seeks to work through us. So, God sends us out with his blessing to serve the world as those who love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Within this section:** *Benediction*

Additionally, we believe the practices we keep mold and shape us, and as a result, we desire our worship services to shape our corporate and mimic our individual practices. In other words, the arc of the worship service is not only designed to be a corporate practice but to also shape our personal practices as well⁴.

Core Values & Worship

- *Personal Conversion:* Throughout the service, but especially through God's Word, we are challenged to apply Gospel truth to our everyday lives. The only way our lives change is to change what we worship, and as a result, in our services, we seek to have our whole lives converted and changed by the Gospel.
- *Spiritual Formation:* The worship service is designed to encourage our ongoing spiritual formation by 1) giving us a framework for how we can grow in relationship with God, 2) opportunity to grow in relationship with others, and 3) learn how to live in light of the Gospel.
- *Community Involvement:* In all of our services we highlight both the brokenness and beauty of the neighborhood by ensuring people know what is taking place in the community. Additionally, every week, we pray for our neighborhood.
- *Mercy And Justice:* Every week, in our prayers of the people, we pray for the broken and unjust realities of our world. We also regularly confront the areas of our lives, the church, and the culture that require God's mercy and his justice.
- *Unity:* In a neighborhood that is changing, we seek to be a place for native East Harlemites and the gentrifier, those of various ethnicities, and those across the socioeconomic spectrum.

⁴ For more on how this arc can shape our personal devotion, see our handout "Sunday Liturgy & Personal Devotion"

Chapter 6

Biblical Peacemaking + Church Government

Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace?

A. Peacemaking

Discipline (or to put in it a better way, reconciliation) is the exercise of authority given to the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and to promote its purity and peace. It is a means of helping its members to lead God-pleasing lives and respond to conflict.

Informal vs. Formal Discipline

Reconciliation and church discipline run along a continuum moving from informal to formal forms of discipline.

Matthew 18:15-17 says: "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

- a. **General (Informal) Discipline.** This includes self-examination, sitting under the teaching of the Scriptures, and general interaction among believers. Believers who are involved in conflicts with one another are discouraged to work through the civil courts. Instead, they are encouraged to work through the system of informal and formal discipline (1 Corinthians 6).
- b. **Judicial (Formal) Discipline.** This is done according to a formal biblical process and is carried out only by the elders. The stages of formal discipline are: Admonition, Suspension from the Sacraments, Deposition from office, and Excommunication. Members and Elders of a church ought to take the call to exercise discipline seriously. However, its use is something which they should not relish and which should always sadden them. Taking any delight in it is contrary to the teaching of Scripture. They should engage in it aware that, even in its harshest forms, its purpose is the healing of the offender. They should practice it always in a way that is in keeping with that hope.

What are the purposes of discipline (reconciliation)?

- a. To maintain the honor and glory of God. (Romans 2:23-24)
- b. To maintain and promote the purity of Christ's Church. (1 Corinthians 15:33-34)
- c. To restore the fallen individual to a life of godliness. (Galatians 6:1)

When and for what does discipline occur?

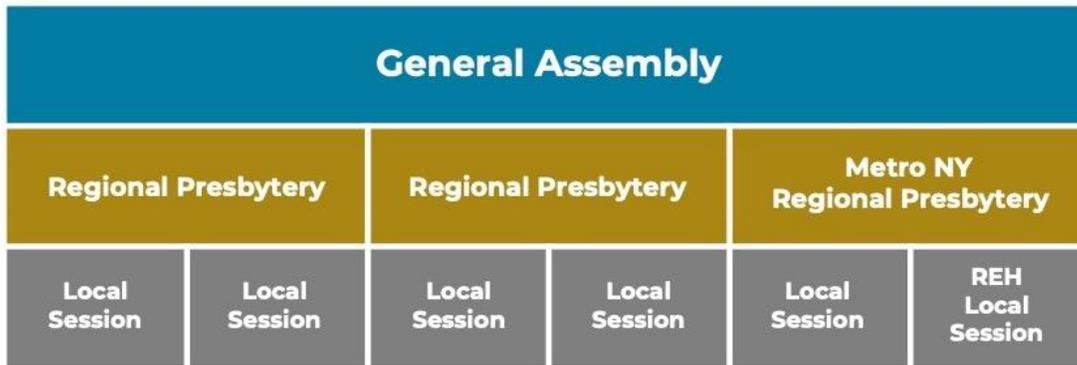
- a. Discipline occurs only with regard to the specific commands of Scripture. Church officers cannot bind the conscience where Scripture has not bound it. They cannot say, "You must be in a small group!"—but they can say, "You must break off this adulterous affair."
- b. *Discipline occurs only against one who has refused to repent of their sin.* Discipline is never engaged in merely for a particular sin, but for refusal to turn from a particular sin.

B. Church Government and Leadership

The Biblical principles of church organization

1. *Multiple officers.* Every congregation was governed by multiple officers, not just one person. Philemon 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Acts 21:17, 18.
2. *There are two classes of officers: elders* (teaching and ruling) and *deacons* (ministry leaders). Each church had several elders and several deacons (Titus 1:5-7). Apostles, prophets, and evangelists seem to be traveling leaders (Ephesians 4:11). Elders and deacons were local.
3. *The office of elder is an office of authority.* Elders set the course for the church. They admit, discipline, and remove members. They are accountable for the health and well-functioning of the church (Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4, 1 Timothy 5:17). In our particular denomination, this office is open only to men. In our denomination, there are two types of elder – Ruling Elders (RE) and Teaching Elders (TE). REs are voted on by the congregation and hold their membership in the congregation. TEs (typically the pastors) hold membership with the presbytery but serve the congregation.
4. *The office of deacon is an office of service and ministry* directed especially at the physical and material needs of the congregation. They are to lead the congregation in caring for the hurts of people both within and outside the church (Acts 6:1-4).
5. *Officers are chosen by the people*, though their election only recognizes the gifts for office as they are given by Christ (Acts 6). The people elect, but they elect the ones with “wisdom” for the job of leadership.
6. *Ordination is done by elders* (1 Timothy 4:14; Acts 13:1-3; Acts 6). There is a sense in which they have “veto” power. They set apart, but they do not elect.
7. *General assemblies* of church officers serve as a court of appeal with real authority over all churches represented (Acts 15). An issue is debated in a council of elders and apostles. The result is considered binding on churches (Acts 16:4, 5). Thus, local congregations were not independent. All the churches in the area are called simply “the church” singular (Acts 5:11; 9:31; 2 Corinthians 12:28). Elders governed house churches in a city.

Presbyterian Church in America Structure



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Three Alternative Church Government Models

Issue Model:	“Episcopal”	“Presbyterian”	“Congregational”
Installation and Ordination of Ministers	Bishop Calls Bishop Ordains	Congregation Calls Regional Elders Ordain	Congregation Calls Congregation Ordains
Membership and Excommunication	Bishop > Priest Priest > Member	Regional Elders > Minister Local Elders > Member	Congregation > Minister Congregation > Member
Power of Larger Councils	Authoritative	Constitutionally Authoritative, Other Matters Advisory	All Advisory
Theory of Church Power	Apostolic Succession. “Top Down” from Bishops	Delegation from Congregation. “Bottom Up” to Elders	Grass-Roots. No Transfer
Exercise of Power	Bishops Exercise Power “Severally”	Elders Exercise Power “Jointly”	Members Exercise Power “Jointly”

Notes/Questions

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