

The Constitution of Grace Bible Church

Revised: 2019

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I. INTRODUCTION

Grace Bible Church is an elder-led local expression of the Church established by Jesus Christ, striving to practice His teachings as contained in the Scriptures. These will include the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the New Testament, and encouraging and equipping people to know Jesus Christ and to grow in a life changing relationship with him. The Bible shall be the final rule for faith and action in this church.

As the church goes about its task, it shall be independent and autonomous and shall remain free of all denominational controls and affiliations. However, it shall recognize as brothers and sisters in Christ all those who have accepted the Lordship of Jesus Christ and have been born again, and shall join with them in their efforts to make disciples of all nations.

II. **NAME**

The name of the church shall be “GRACE BIBLE CHURCH”.

III. **NATURE**

Grace Bible Church shall be a non-profit organization. No income of the organization shall inure to any private person. In the event of dissolution, the remaining assets shall be distributed by the church elders to an organization or organizations which further the Kingdom of God.

IV. **GENERAL PURPOSE**

The Church shall have as its purpose the worship of God, prayer, the exposition of Scripture as the standard of both faith and life, the discipling and equipping of the saved, evangelism of the lost, and such other purposes as are consistent with the Holy Bible.

V. **VISION STATEMENT**

God's grace changing lives.

VI. **CORE VALUES**

Grace, Humility and Teamwork.

VII. STATEMENT OF FAITH

A. The Bible

We believe the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, to be the verbally inspired Word of God. Men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to record precisely the words that God intended. It is without error in the original writings. The Bible is God's complete written revelation of Himself and His will for the salvation of humankind, and is the final authority for Christian faith and life. (Psalm 19:7-9; Matthew 5:18; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21)

B. God

We believe in one living and true God, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three equal persons – God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are identical in essence while distinct in office and activity. God is a personal, spiritual, and intelligent Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. (Genesis 1:26; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 5:7).

C. The Person and Work of God the Father

We believe God the Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of human history according to His purpose and grace. In His nature He is completely holy, all-powerful, all-knowing, omnipresent, eternal, transcendent, immutable, self-sufficient, self-existent, wrathful, just, gracious, good, merciful and loving. He is the sender of His only Son, Jesus Christ. As the Father of the elect, He is their provider, disciplinarian, and restorer. (Psalm 139:1-18, 145:8-9; Isaiah 40:18-31; Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 3:17, 6:30-32; John 3:16, Acts 17:29; Romans 1:18, 3:26, 11:33-36; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 1:3-6; Hebrews 12:5-13; 1 John 1:5)

D. The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who became a man without ceasing to be God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a perfect life and died on the cross as a substitutionary atonement for our sins. Our salvation is guaranteed by His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead. He is now exalted in heaven at the right hand of God the Father, where He ministers as High Priest for His people. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. (Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:1-14, 10:23, 10:30, 11:35; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Colossians 2:9; Acts 9:1-11; Hebrews 1:3, 3:1, 4:14-15, 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2)

E. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the ministry of God the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts people of sin, and gives life to the spiritually dead, who receive Jesus Christ as Savior, baptizing them at the moment of faith into the Church. He permanently indwells believers and bestows on them spiritual gifts. He leads, instructs, and empowers them for godly living and service. As they learn more about Him and His work through the Scriptures, pray, and yield to Him (allow Him to direct and control their thoughts, words, and actions), He beautifies their character with the fruit of the Spirit and transforms them into the image of Christ. (John 3:8, 7:37-39, 14:12, 16-17, 26, 16:7-11; Romans 8:1-13, 26-27; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 1:13-14, 5:18)

F. Creation and Fall

We believe that all things in heaven and on earth were created by God and exist by His power and for His glory. We believe that humankind was created innocent and in the image of God, but that they sinned, bringing both spiritual and physical death to themselves and their posterity. While still made in God's image, humankind has inherited a sinful nature and is incapable of redeeming themselves. All human life is sacred, in that God created humankind in his own image, and that Christ died for all humankind; therefore, every human being, born and unborn, young and old, possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:17, 3:1-24; Psalm 139:13-16; John 3; Romans 3:10-12, 5:12-19)

G. Marriage

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female, and that these two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. We believe that God created marriage to be exclusively the union of one man and one woman, and that intimate sexual activity is to occur exclusively within that union. (Gen 1:26-27, 2:24)

H. Salvation

We believe that every person is lost in sin apart from Christ and in need of a Savior. Jesus Christ died as a full and sufficient payment for the sins of the entire world, and His shed blood is the only provision by which an individual may be delivered from the wrath of God. We believe that salvation is a gift of God and is received by humankind only through faith in Jesus Christ. We believe that humankind is justified by grace through faith alone, apart from human merit or works. We believe that all true believers, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever. (John 1:12, 3:36, 5:24, 6:37, 10:27-30; Acts 4:12, 13:38-39; Romans 3:23-24, 6:23, 8:1, 29-30, 38-39, ; Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-10; Philippians 1:6; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 9:22; 1 John 5:13)

I. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Christ instituted the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are to be observed by believers until He returns. (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Baptism: We believe that water baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience publicly announcing and symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. (Acts 8:36-38; Romans 6:3-5)

The Lord's Supper: We believe that the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death by which He established the New Covenant, the elements being symbols of His body and blood. Every believer has a right and an obligation to partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper. (1 Corinthians 11:20-34; Matthew 26:26-29)

J. The Church

We believe that the true, universal church is made up of all who have saving faith in Jesus Christ. The believer is placed into the church by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, and is thus a part of the Body of Christ of which Jesus is the Head. We believe that the church, as defined by the New Testament, is distinct from Israel ("God's chosen people", as defined in the Old and New Testaments). We believe that the true, universal church is comprised of local, visible assemblies of professing believers in Jesus Christ, who are voluntarily joined together in one place for the purposes of worship of God, prayer, the exposition of Scripture, the discipling and equipping of the saved, evangelism of the lost, fellowship, and the carrying out of that congregation's ministries of such other purposes as are specified in the Scriptures for a New Testament Church. We believe that every local church has the right under Christ to decide and govern its own affairs. (Acts 2:1-4, 11:16-17; Romans 11; 1 Corinthians 10:32, 12:12-14; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:25-27; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Ephesians 4:11-16, 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 2:5, 9)

K. Events of the End Times

We believe in the personal, physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. He will restore the created world by establishing the new heavens and new earth, where the glorious presence of God will 'cover the earth as the waters cover the sea'. He will consummate the kingdom of God once for all where perfect peace and justice will reign forever and ever. (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:9; Matthew 24:4- 25:46; Revelation 19:11-22:5)

We believe that every person will be raised from the dead. Believers will receive a glorified resurrection body and will live with God in everlasting blessedness and joy. We believe that every unbeliever will be punished with everlasting, conscious torment away from the presence of the Lord. Believers will be raised to stand for evaluation at the judgment seat of Christ to determine rewards based on their faithfulness and obedience to God. (Matthew 10:28, 13:48-50; Luke 16:19-26; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 4:14, 5:1-10; Philippians 1:23, 3:18-21; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 9:27)

VIII. **MEMBERSHIP**

A. Qualifications

1. Profess belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
2. Be involved in a Grace Community Group and/or an active ministry
3. Agree to the membership covenant
4. Complete the membership questionnaire
5. Understand that we are an elder led church and thus membership is for ministry only and not for governing or administrative purposes i.e. congregational meetings, voting, etc.

B. Termination of church membership shall result from one of the following:

1. Death,
2. Withdrawal,
3. Transfer to another church,
4. Disciplinary action by the elders taken for reasons such as persistent, unbiblical behavior.

C. Church Membership Covenant

As a follower of Jesus Christ and by the grace of God I commit to:

1. Support the direction, doctrine and leadership of Grace Bible Church.
2. Pursue a growing relationship with Jesus Christ by:
 - a. Regularly attending worship services at Grace Bible Church and practicing private disciplines
 - b. Prioritizing supporting Grace Bible Church financially
 - c. Living in community with other believers
 - d. Discovering my spiritual gifts and using them to serve the church and the world
 - e. Investing in relationships with unchurched people, sharing my faith and inviting them to Grace Bible Church

IX. **DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION**

If any member of this church is found in serious, open, and unrepentant sin, such member may, at the discretion of the elders, be admonished by the elders in brotherly love and exhorted to good works (Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 10:24-25). Should such a member choose to continue living in sin, the elders shall dismiss such a member from church membership and fellowship, in the hope that he or she will confess, repent, and seek restoration, in which case he or she may be readmitted to membership upon approval by the elders. The elders at their discretion may take similar actions involving non-members.

Members having grievances against one another should prayerfully attempt to be reconciled (Matthew 18:15-17; Colossians 3:12-13; Matthew 5:23-25). If such reconciliation fails, he or she should try again accompanied by a brother or sister, and, if that fails, bring the matter before the elders for resolution (I Corinthians 6:1-6).

No accusation shall be brought against an elder or pastor except on the testimony of at least two members. The matter shall then be taken up by the elders for investigation and final resolution. (I Timothy 5:19-21)

X. **ELDER BOARD**

Our church will be led by qualified men serving on the elder board. They will have final responsibility before the Lord for leading, feeding, and overseeing the flock. (1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

A. Authority

The elder board has the ultimate and final human authority under Christ for the direction, doctrine, discipleship, and discipline of the body. (Hebrews 13:17) Elders will exercise this authority as humble servants, not lording it over those placed in their charge. (1 Peter 5:2-3; Hebrews 13:17)

B. Qualifications

The qualifications for the office of elder are outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5. These qualifications have to do with character qualities as they relate to the community at large, the church, family, self, and God. We recognize that there is a higher ethical standard for an elder than for anyone else in the church. Attitudes of weak and immature believers are largely patterned after the acts of those they follow and hold in high esteem. Therefore, with due respect for individual conscience and personal scruples, those who accept the role of elder shall carefully guard themselves, not only from what they feel is worldly, but from what might cause others to stumble and from that which has the appearance of evil..

They are to be members who are in agreement with the constitution of the church.

As the Apostle Paul says, they should aspire to the office of elder. This means that an elder desires to assume responsibility for the souls of people, and to one day stand before the Lord to give an account for those souls. (Hebrews 13:17)

C. Terms of active service on the elder board

1. Non-staff elders

Non-staff elders shall serve for a four-year term of active service on the elder board. After this period of active service, they shall step down for rest and refreshment for a period of at least two years. Non-staff elders, with their consent, may be called back into active elder status by the active elders, as led by the Holy Spirit.

2. Staff elders

Non-staff elders will appoint one to three qualified senior-level pastors to sit on the elder board as ex officio members. When there are 1 or 2 staff elders, each will be a voting member of the board. When there are 3 staff elders, they will rotate voting status yearly to ensure 2 voting staff elders.

3. Leave of absence

An elder may take or be asked to take a leave of absence from active status in a time of crisis, family need, or for a qualification issue.

4. Conflicts of interest

Any member having a conflict of interest regarding a matter being discussed will excuse himself from discussion and action on that matter.

D. Responsibilities of the elder board are as follows:

To set the overall philosophy, vision, direction, and policies of the church and assure their implementation by the church staff – devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4).

To be responsible for the overall teaching and training of the flock to the end that they may present those under their care complete in Christ; (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17-18; Titus 1:9).

To attend elder meetings and worship services consistently (Hebrews 10:25).

To be responsible for the church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1).

E. Selection of Elders

According to Acts 20:28, the Holy Spirit sets these individuals apart to the office of elder. As individuals are identified by the Holy Spirit, the responsibility of the elders is to confirm His choices. The elders will nominate men in the church who meet the aforementioned qualifications. Process:

The following process will normally be timed for installations to be held in January; however, the elder board may vary this.

The elders may receive names of nominees from the elder board, staff, and congregation.

They then will identify candidates from those named and prayerfully decide which men to consider.

Upon unanimous consent of the elders, one or more elders will visit the prospective elder and, unless the conversation and God's leading are to the contrary, will extend an invitation to fill out an elder questionnaire.

After submitting the questionnaire, the candidate will meet with two elders for a thorough discussion of his responses and, assuming the interview indicates moving forward, the candidate and his wife (if married), will meet with the elders.

Assuming continued approval of the elder board, the candidate(s) will be presented to the congregation which will be given a period of at least two weeks to express any feedback to the elders.

After this two-week period, a final decision will be made by the elders.

If approved, the candidate will be installed publicly through the laying on of hands.

The elder board may call inactive elders back to active service without repeating this process.

Staff elders may be called without exercising this process.

F. Number and Quorum

The number of active elders will typically be 9 to 12 voting members.

A quorum for transacting business at regular meetings will be 60% of voting elders. If one or more elders are excused from a board meeting for an executive session,

the quorum for that executive session will be 60% of the voting elders less the number of those excused.

When a quorum exists, motions will be carried by a majority of those present.

G. Removal from Office

An elder, who is no longer qualified for service, may be removed by a vote of the elders. (1 Timothy 5:19-20)

Staff elders may be removed from office as above or when no longer employed by Grace Bible Church.

XI. **CHURCH STAFF**

The elder board of Grace Bible Church will oversee the hiring of staff. When calling a senior level pastor, the active elders shall determine a process for selecting the candidate they believe God has called.

XII. **FISCAL YEAR**

The fiscal year of the church shall run from September 1 through August 31.

XIII. **RELATIONSHIPS**

Grace Bible Church shall be an independently governed, not-for-profit corporation.

XIV. **REVISIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

As part of their leadership and oversight responsibilities, only the active elders may revise this constitution. The proposed revisions shall be presented to the congregation for their information and comment at least one month prior to final approval by the elders. This period is intended to provide time for prayer, feedback, and seeking God's will.