



**GRACE**  
BIBLE CHURCH  
of Lackawanna County

**CHURCH COVENANT,  
ARTICLES OF FAITH,  
CONSTITUTION &  
BYLAWS**

REVISED & REAFFIRMED  
JANUARY 2025

# CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the public confession of our faith, having been immersed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, solemnly and joyfully enter in to covenant with one another, as one body of Christ.

We purpose, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to attend its services regularly; to give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to give faithfully of time and talent in its activities; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel throughout all nations.

We also purpose to maintain family and private devotions; to train our children according to the Word of God; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all gossip, backbiting and unrighteous anger; to abstain from all forms of activity which dishonor our Lord Jesus Christ, cause stumbling to a fellow believer or hinder the winning of a soul to Christ; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the cause of Christ, our Savior; and to give Him preeminence in all things.

We further purpose to encourage one another in the blessed hope of our Lord's return; to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior, to seek it without delay.

We moreover purpose that when we remove from this place we will as soon as possible unite with some other church of like faith and order where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word. In the event there is no such church, we shall seek, with the Lord's help, to establish one.

# ARTICLES OF FAITH

## I. OF THE SCRIPTURES

We believe that every word of the Holy Scriptures as originally written is verbally inspired by God and the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore, is truth without error. We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried. We believe that the Scriptures are the final authority for faith and practice.

*2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21*

## II. OF THE TRUE GOD

We believe there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite Spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love. We believe that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

*Exodus 20:2,3; Matt. 28:19,20; 1 Cor. 8:6; Rev. 4:11*

## III. OF JESUS CHRIST

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He is coequal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and He is infinite, having no beginning. All things were created through Him and for Him, and He holds all creation together. At the right time in history, Jesus, being fully God, took on human nature, becoming fully man as well through the virgin birth. We believe that Jesus was conceived by Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God, and God, the Son.

Jesus became a man to live a perfect, sinless life on our behalf, and He died as the perfect sacrifice for our sins (see article VIII, Atonement). We believe that Jesus literally died on the cross, and that 3 days later, as He promised, He rose literally and bodily from the grave, proving that God the Father was satisfied with His payment for our sins. We believe that He is alive today, interceding for us at the Father's right hand, and preparing a place for us. We believe that He will return again to the earth, bodily and visibly, to

rescue His people and to judge the wicked (see article XXI)

We believe that there is no other Savior for mankind beside Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

*John 1:1-3; Col 1:16-17; Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; Gal. 4:4-5; Matt.1:18 25; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:14; Rom 4:25; Isa. 53:11; Rom. 8:34; John 14:2-3; Heb. 9:27-18; John 14:6; Acts 4:12*

#### **IV. OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; that He bears witness to the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the Agent in the new birth; that He seals, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies and helps the believer.

*John 14:16,17; Matt 28:19; Heb. 9:14; John 14:26; Luke 1:35; Gen. 1:1-3; John 16:7-11; Acts 5:30-32; John 3:5,6; Eph. 1:13,14; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 11:16; Rom. 8:14, 16, 26, 27*

#### **V. OF THE DEVIL, OR SATAN**

We believe in the personality of Satan, that he is the unholy god of this age, and the author of all the powers of darkness, and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire.

*Matt. 4:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:10*

#### **VI. OF CREATION**

We accept the Genesis account of creation and believe that man and woman came by direct creation of God and not by evolution.

*Gen. 1 and 2; Col. 1:16,17; Matt. 19:4-6; John 1:1-3*

#### **VII. OF THE FALL OF MAN**

We believe that man was created in innocence under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and happy state in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not only by constraint but of choice, and, therefore under just condemnation without defense or excuse.

*Gen. 3; Rom 3:10-19; Rom 1:18-32*

## **VIII. OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH**

We believe that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God, and God, the Son.

*Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; Matt.1:18-25; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:14*

## **IX. OF THE ATONEMENT FOR SIN**

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, Who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin, honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins; that His atonement consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the just dying for the unjust; Christ, the Lord, bearing our sin in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven, and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be suitable, a compassionate and an all sufficient Savior.

*Eph. 2:8; Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:21-26, John 3:16; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14; Isa. 53:4-12; 1 John 4:10; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21*

## **X. OF GRACE IN THE NEW CREATION**

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the creation is brought about in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with the divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life.

*John 3:3-21; 2 Cor. 5:16-21; 1 John 5:1-5; Acts 16:30-34; 2 Peter 1:3,4; Rom. 6:22,23; Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 2:13*

## **XI. OF JUSTIFICATION**

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures

to such as believe in Him is justification:

- a. That justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life, on principles of righteousness;
- b. That it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done; but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood, His righteousness is imputed to us.

*Acts. 13:39; Isa. 53:11; Rom 8:1; Rom 5:1-9*

## **XII. OF THE FREENESS OF SALVATION**

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

*Isa. 55:1; Rom 16:25-27; John 3:18,19*

## **XIII. OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH**

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby, being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

*Mark 1:15; John: 16:8; Luke 18:13; Rom. 10:9-11*

## **XIV. OF GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE**

We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which He graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of His free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the Gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it

with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

*2 Tim. 1:8,9; 2 Thes. 2:13,14; Eph. 1:4,11; 1 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Thes. 1:4-10; Rom 8:28-31; 2 Peter 1:10,11*

## **XV. OF SANCTIFICATION**

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of His holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means, especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

*1 Thes. 4:3; 1 John 2:29; Phil 2:12,13*

## **XVI. OF PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS**

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

*John 8:31; 1 John 2:19; Rom 8:28; Phil 1:6*

## **XVII. OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**

We believe that a local church is a congregation of immersed believers, associated by covenant faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its officers are pastors and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. We believe the true mission of the church is faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have opportunity. We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only Superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with one another in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; on all matters of

membership, of polity, of government, of discipline, of benevolence, the will of the local church is final.

*Acts 2:41-47; Eph.1:22,23; Eph. 4:11-16; Acts 20:17-28; 1 Tim.3:1-13; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23,24; Acts 15:12-22; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Titus 1:5-9*

## **XVIII. OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water to show forth in solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination.

*Acts. 8:36-39; John 3:23; Rom. 6:3-5; Matt 3:16; Col. 2:12; 1 Cor. 11:23-32*

## **XIX. OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED**

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked, and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death, in the everlasting felicity of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost.

*Mal. 3:18; Gen. 18:23; Rom. 6:17,18; 1 John 5:19; Rom. 7:6; Rom. 6:23; Prov. 14:32; Luke 16:25,26; Matt. 25:34-46, John 8:21.*

## **XX. OF MARRIAGE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY**

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person in His image as male or female. We believe that God created the two genders to be distinct and complementary. (Gen 1:26-27; Ps.: 139:13-16) Rejection of one's biological gender is rejection of the image of God within that person and God's purpose for which that person was created. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by appearance, medication, or surgery (Rom. 9:20)

We believe that the only legitimate marriage is that which is defined by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible as the joining of one



man (born physically a male) and one woman (born physically a female) in a single, exclusive union. (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23)

We believe that sex is a gift from God intended only to be enjoyed by a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5,10; Eph. 5:22-33; Heb. 13.4)

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including but not limited to adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, polygamy, and pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Gen. 18:20; 19:5,13; 26:7-10; Lev. 18:1-30; Matt. 5:27-28; 15:18-20; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9-10; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4)

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and turn from their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11.)

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31.) Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Grace Bible Church.

## **XXI. OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT**

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interest and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming Prince of the kings of the earth.

*Rom. 13:1-7; Ex. 18:21,22; Acts 23:5; Matt.22:21; Acts 5:29; Acts 4:19, 20; Daniel 3:17,18*

## **XXII. OF THE RESURRECTION, PERSONAL, VISIBLE, PREMILLENNIAL RETURN OF CHRIST, AND RELATED EVENTS**

### **A. We believe in the Bodily Resurrection**

*Matt. 28:6,7; Luke 24:39; John 20:27; 1 Cor. 15:4; Mark 16:6;*

*Luke 24:2-6*

- B. The Ascension.  
*Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:51; Rev. 3:21; Heb. 12:2*
- C. The High Priesthood.  
*Heb. 8:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Heb. 2:17; Heb. 5:9,10*
- D. The Second Coming.  
*John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thes. 4:16; James 5:8*
- E. The Resurrection of the Righteous Dead.  
*1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 51-54*
- F. The Change of the Living in Christ.  
*1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thes. 4:13-18; Phil. 3:20, 21*
- G. The Throne of David.  
*Luke 1:31-33; Isa. 9:6, 7; Acts 2:29-31*
- H. The Millennial Reign  
*1 Cor. 15:25; Isa. 32:1; Isa. 11:4,5; Ps. 72:8; Rev. 20:1-6*

## **CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE GRACE BIBLE CHURCH OF LACKAWANNA COUNTY**

### **PREAMBLE**

As a group of Christians desiring to worship God according to the dictates of our hearts without sectarian principles and free from denominational control, we form ourselves into an Independent Bible-believing Church Organization.

These by-laws are a tool to help us accomplish our God-given purpose as a local New Testament Church. These are given to present the practical applications of our beliefs and values, to set forth organizational structure, and to outline procedures we believe to be consistent with God's Word.

### **ARTICLE I. NAME**

The name of this church shall be the Grace Bible Church of Lackawanna County.

### **ARTICLE II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this church shall be:

## **A. Religious**

To promote the worship of God by the preaching of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the observance of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

To enable believers of Jesus Christ to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and to equip them for ministry to the glory of God.

To lead sinners into a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, both locally and throughout the world.

To provide a place for believers to worship in spirit and in truth, and to encourage true biblical fellowship among believers in Christ.

## **B. Charitable**

To seek the relief of the poor, distressed or underprivileged.

## **C. Educational**

To equip and aid attendees in fulfilling their biblical responsibility in the training, nurturing, and education of their children.

# **ARTICLE III. MINISTRIES**

## **Section 1: Purpose**

Our purpose will be carried out by ministries such as but not limited to:

- a. Regular Lord's Day services with Bible teaching and evangelistic ministry.
- b. Weekly gatherings to provide opportunity for prayer, Bible study, or other special services.
- c. Adult, youth, children and family ministries.
- d. Performing weddings, or dedications that comply with our Articles of Faith, Paragraph XIX.

The church property cannot be used for weddings or dedications that are in conflict with our Articles of Faith, nor will any Grace Bible Church pastor, elder, deacon, or staff member be allowed to perform or participate in weddings or dedications that are in conflict with our Articles of Faith. Elder board approval is required for any Grace Bible Church pastor to perform weddings for non-members who are marrying in accordance with Paragraph XIX of our Articles of Faith. All members of

Grace Bible Church affirm their agreement with Paragraph XIX of our Articles of Faith.

- e. Performing funerals.
- f. To support missionaries and para-church outreach endeavors
- g. To engage in local outreach programs

## **Section 2: Facilities Use**

The church property and facilities are a stewardship entrusted to us by God to be used primarily for the worship of Jesus Christ, the equipping of His people, and the spread of the Gospel to those who do not yet know Jesus as Savior. Because of this stewardship, we believe that God will hold us accountable for how the property and facilities are used. Therefore, the church property and facilities may not be used in any way that is in conflict with our Articles of Faith or our By-Laws. Allowing the church property and facilities to be used for purposes that contradict the church's beliefs would be material cooperation with that activity, and would be a grave violation of the church's faith and religious practice (2 Cor 6:14; 1 Thes 5:22). Further, it would bring shame on the name of Jesus Christ and could introduce confusion and scandal in the minds of the very people we are trying reach with the Gospel.

In accordance with Paragraph XIX of our Articles of Faith (Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality), use of the church's gender-specific facilities is restricted to persons whose birth gender corresponds to the gender designated for that facility—except for persons requiring physical assistance by a caretaker or guardian of opposite gender. This includes, but is not limited to restrooms, as well as gender-based activities, such as women's Bible studies, men's Bible studies, small groups, prayer groups, etc.

The church property cannot be used for weddings or dedications that are in conflict with our Articles of Faith, nor will any Grace Bible Church pastor, elder, deacon, or staff member be allowed to perform or participate in weddings or dedications that are in conflict with our Articles of Faith. Elder board approval is required for any Grace Bible Church pastor to perform weddings for non-members who are marrying in accordance with Paragraph XIX of our Articles of Faith. All members of Grace Bible Church affirm their agreement with Paragraph XIX of our Articles of Faith.

All persons employed by Grace Bible Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, must agree to and abide by the Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Articles of Faith, Paragraph XIX).

## **ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1: Qualification for membership**

- A. Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.
- B. Giving evidence of regeneration in their daily lives.
- C. Having been baptized by immersion after conversion.

### **Section 2: Membership Procedure**

Each candidate for membership will:

- a. Meet the requirements of Article IV Section 1
- b. Attend and complete the requirements of the class designated for new members
- c. Sign a membership covenant
- d. Give their testimony to the New Member Interview Team (see Article VII, Section 1, Paragraph A.8.)
- e. Be recommended by the New Member Interview Team to the Elders
- f. All names of candidates for membership will be announced to the congregation at least one week prior to the church vote.
- g. Upon recommendation by the Elders, be affirmed by vote of the congregation at any duly called meeting. (see Article VIII, Sect. 1)

### **Section 3: Role and Responsibilities of Members**

- A. To continue in their covenant commitment to this church
- B. To remain consistently involved in the life and ministry of this church as demonstrated through regular attendance, contribution, and active participation in the work of this church according to the New Testament teachings.
- C. Demonstrate a positive and supportive attitude of unity

### **Section 4: Status of Members**

- A. Active Member

One who fulfills his role and responsibilities as outlined in Article IV Section 3, except associate members as identified in Article IV, Section 4, B.

- B. Associate Member

Eligibility requirements, membership duties and responsi-

bilities will be the same as those for active members. However, an associate member will possess no voting rights. Those eligible for associate membership may include but is not limited to:

- a. Active Members under the age of 18
- b. Missionaries, college students and military personnel
- c. Missionaries sent by Grace Bible Church and currently serving on their field of ministry
- d. Current members who move outside of the area and are no longer able to attend Grace Bible Church will automatically be placed as associate member status.

### C. Inactive Member

When a member, with no just cause or reason satisfactory to the Elders, will fail to fulfill his covenant commitment to church membership for a period of six months, the member will be considered inactive.

If this member continues in this failure, the Elders will recommend to the congregation that this member be removed from the membership roll.

However, this action will not be taken until reasonable efforts have been made by the congregation to restore this person to active membership.

## **Section 5: Removal from Membership**

By any of the following:

- a. By letter or recommendation from this church to another specific church of like faith and doctrine
- b. By written request of the member
- c. By recommendation of the Elders following the steps outlined in Section 4, Paragraph C.

In the event that a member is removed from the membership roll, the member will be notified in writing by the Elders.

- d. Discipline (see Section 6)

## **Section 6: Discipline**

The purpose of biblical church discipline is for the restoration of individuals to Christ and His people and to insure the purity of the church.

Discipline will be applied when any member refuses to repent

from sin such as but not limited to: holding false or heretical doctrine; obviously and persistently living inconsistently with his Christian profession; living in violation of the law or public morals; living disorderly; disturbing the unity and peace of this church. *Romans 16:17-18, Titus 3:10, I Corinthians 5 & 6*

The steps for discipline in the assembly will follow Biblical guidelines such as found in Galatians 6 and Matthew 18. Each step is not limited to just one attempt.

1. The believer aware of the sin confronts the person in sin. If the person in sin repents and is reconciled, the matter is concluded. If not:
2. The member contacts another spiritual person (Galatians 6:1), preferably one who is also aware of the situation, and together confront the person in sin. If the person in sin repents and is reconciled, the matter is concluded. If not:
3. The individuals, together with at least one member of the Elders, again confront the person in sin. If the person in sin repents and is reconciled, the matter is concluded. If not:
4. The Elders will confront the person in sin. If the person in sin repents and is reconciled, the matter is concluded. If not:
5. The matter is brought before the whole church. The body is directed to confront the person in sin to call them back to Christ. If the person in sin repents and is reconciled, the matter is concluded.
6. If the person in sin fails to publicly repent within one month after it is brought before the church, then by unanimous decision of the Elders the person in sin will be presented to the church for removal from membership by vote.
7. The Elders are not exempt from the discipline procedure, with attention to I Timothy 5:19.

*Matt. 18:15 ff; 1 Cor. 5:12 ff; 2 Thes. 3:6,11,15 ff; Rom. 16:17*

## **ARTICLE V. CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

We believe that the Scriptures are the final authority for faith and practice. We seek, therefore, a form of government consistent with the Holy Scriptures which clearly teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Head of the Church. He alone possesses all power for the establishing, calling, building, and governing of the Church. All local church authority is delegated authority. No one possesses a preeminence, but each enjoy the privilege of serving one another.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, has established two offices in the visible local church, that of Elder (men who are referred to in Scripture as pastor, elder, overseer, leader) and Deacon (biblical term for servant applying to both men and women). The Elders are responsible for leading, teaching, equipping and shepherding the church. The Deacons are ministering servants who care for the needs of this local assembly and who assist the Elders.

Each member of the congregation is responsible to be actively involved in the prayerful selection and support of the Elders and Deacons, as well as fulfilling additional responsibilities set forth in this constitution. In matters of congregational decision-making, a majority of those present will decide, except as described in Article VIII, Section 3, Paragraph D.

## **ARTICLE VI. SELECTION OF OFFICERS**

### **Section 1: Council of Elders**

#### **A. Elders**

The Deacons will appoint a Nomination Team as needed, consisting of no fewer than three active members, one of whom is to be a deacon. The individual being considered for the position of Elder may not be on this Nomination Team. The approval process will be as follows:

1. Any church member may recommend an individual(s), who has been an active member for at least two years, for the position of elder. The Deacon Team will then establish a Nomination Team to interview the individual(s).
2. The Nomination Team will consider the qualifications, giftedness, and call of the person recommended and present the individual to the Elders. After the elder examination process is complete, the Nomination Team will be dissolved.
3. The Elders after prayer and thorough examination, will present the individual to the congregation.
4. The congregation will be given at least 30 days to seek the candidate out and speak with him after which he will be presented to the congregation for a vote.
5. To be selected as an Elder will require a minimum 75 percent affirmation of those members voting at a duly called meeting. (Article VIII, Section 1)
6. The term of office will be three years.



## **B. Pastor-Teaching Elder**

Upon recognition by the Elders of a ministry need that would require a compensated Pastoral position, (if there are no Elders the responsibility will fall on the Deacons) the process will be as follows:

1. The existing Elders will appoint a Pastoral Search Team, comprised of no fewer than three active members, one of whom is to be a deacon.
2. The Pastoral Search Team will consider all recommendations submitted to them and seek out potential candidates for the position.
3. After prayer and thorough examination, and upon unanimous decision of the Pastoral Search Team, the individual will be presented as a candidate to the Elders, followed by a meeting with the Elders and Deacons.
4. Upon unanimous decision of the Elders, the individual will be presented to the congregation as a candidate.
5. The congregation will then be given ample opportunity to examine the candidate.
6. The congregation will assemble to vote on the candidate no sooner than one week after the conclusion of the examination process. The extending of a call to the Pastoral Candidate will require a minimum 75 percent affirmation of those members present at a duly called meeting. (Article VIII, Section 1)
7. Membership into the church is granted to a Pastor and his wife who accept a call to serve in the church in this financially supported position.

## **C. Removal of an Elder or Pastor**

Any of the following circumstances will remove an individual from the Council of Elders:

- A. Voluntary Resignation
- B. Involuntary Dismissal

Involuntary dismissal of any Elder, paid or non-paid, will be a disciplinary action of the church body in accordance with the instruction of 1 Tim. 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1 and Matt. 18:15-18. The specific procedures for this are spelled out in Article IV, Section 6 with the following differences:

- a. If the situation is such that it necessitates the dismissal

from office, the Elders may suggest voluntary resignation by the person involved. If he refuses, or believes he has been unfairly treated, then it is to be brought before the congregation to hear the issues and to allow the person concerned to present his case. It will then be decided by a simple majority vote of the body at a congregational meeting. The quorum required for such a meeting must exceed 50% of the total active membership. The congregation must be informed of such a meeting at least two weeks prior to the time of the meeting.

- b. If at least 10% of the active membership of the church believe they are not being biblically and properly led by the Elders or an individual Elder, they are to follow the procedures of Matt. 18:15-16 and first discuss the issues with the Elders. If the meeting with the Elders does not lead to resolution, they have the right to request a congregational meeting (Matt. 18:17) which must take place within 60 days. The Elders will select the date and will announce to the congregation at least two weeks prior the time and purpose of the meeting. The quorum required for such a meeting must exceed 50% of the total active membership. The congregation, at such time, may remove any or all of the Elders by a simple majority vote.

## **Section 2: Deacons**

The selection of Deacons will be overseen by the Elders. Deacons will be selected annually and will serve a one year term. The number of Deacons selected will be determined by the Elders based upon the needs of the ministry and input from the present Deacons.

1. A nomination form will be made available for the members along with guidelines for nominations, i.e. Biblical qualifications and By-Laws which apply.
2. At least one Elder will then meet collectively with all nominees for the purpose of reviewing the biblical qualifications and function of the office.
3. A nominee for Deacon must be an active member for at least one year before taking office.
4. The final list of nominees will be posted 30 days before the annual congregational meeting.
5. The congregation will affirm by simple majority vote of those

present and voting at a duly called meeting those who will serve for the coming year as Deacons in the ministry roles identified by the Elders.

6. Any of the following circumstances will remove an individual as a Deacon:
  - a. Resignation
  - b. Failure to live according to biblical qualifications for the office as determined by the Elders. *I Timothy 3:8-12*
  - c. Dismissal by culmination of the discipline process. (Article IV, Section 6)

## **ARTICLE VII. DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

### **Section 1: Elders**

The Elders will have oversight of the spiritual welfare of the church, preach the gospel, teach the Word, provide leadership to the overall ministry, have charge of the stated services of public worship and oversee the administration of the ordinances of the church. The Elders will ideally consist of at least three qualified men both remunerated and non-remunerated. Qualifications for the Elders will be those set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Elders must sign a copy of the Articles of Faith before assuming the position to affirm their agreement with our Articles of Faith. Pastors remunerated by the church must sign a copy of the Articles of Faith annually.

#### **A. Elders**

- a. The Elders will work together in a spirit of unity to provide leadership and direction to the overall ministry of the church, being sure that each ministry remains in line with the foundational biblical purposes for existence.
- b. All ministries of the church will come under the direct supervision of the Elders.
- c. The Elders are responsible to oversee the pulpit ministry of the church.
- d. A majority of Elders must be present to transact official business. The Elders will select a secretary to keep minutes of all such meetings in a permanent record.
- e. Elders will be ex-officio members of all ministry teams and committees connected with the church.

- f. The Elders will be responsible to ensure a proper evaluation process is established for all ministry staff and personnel.
- g. The Elders are responsible to oversee the maintaining of accurate and up-to-date list of active and inactive members.
- h. The Elders are responsible for appointing a New Member Interview Team which will include at least one Deacon.
- i. Each Elder who is serving in a financially compensated position will be entitled to an annual paid vacation. The vacation policy will be established by the Elders in conjunction with the Deacons.
- j. Elders who are not financially compensated will have a three year term of office. They may be reelected for another term.
- k. Any Elder who has outside ministry opportunities may pursue them upon consensus of the Elders.

## **B. Elder Team Leader**

The Elders will select an Elder Team Leader from among the members of the Elder Board. Under normal circumstances, he would be one of the paid full-time Elders, recognized by the other members of the Elder Board as being gifted by God in administration.

- a. The Elder Team Leader's responsibilities include the following:
  - i. Lead the Elders to work together in a spirit of mutual cooperation and accountability.
  - ii. Ensure mutual accountability and proper evaluation for the fulfillment of the responsibilities given to each Elder.
  - iii. Ensure that each area of ministry has the oversight of one of the Elders.
- b. In the absence of an Elder Team Leader, the existing Elders will be responsible to fulfill the above functions.

## **Section 2: Deacons**

The New Testament Deacons are ministering servants. Theirs is a ministry of service, mercy and care to the diverse needs of a local church body. The Deacons are responsible to serve by assist-

ing the Elders. Deacons must affirm their agreement with our Articles of Faith.

- A. The qualifications of Deacons are those set forth in I Tim. 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6.
- B. The Deacons chosen by the congregation will be appointed by the Elders to serve in an area of ministry need that best fits their giftedness and abilities, including one who will serve as a Deacon Team Leader.
- C. The role of the Deacon Team Leader will be to assist the Elders and the Deacons as needed to ensure the effective working of the Deacons' ministries.
- D. The Deacons will be available to assist the Elders in the administration of the Lord's Supper as needed.
- E. The Deacons will assist the Elders in the organization and administration of the church as requested.
- F. In the event there are no Elders,
  - a. The Deacons will appoint a Pastoral Search Team and follow the steps outlined in this constitution. Article VI, Section 1, Paragraph B.
  - b. The Deacons will secure pulpit supply.
- G. As an accommodation to legal relationships outside the church, the designated lead pastor shall serve as President of the corporation, the secretary of the Board of Deacons shall serve as Secretary of the corporation, and the church treasurer shall serve as Treasurer of the corporation.
- H. The Deacons may meet collectively as needed with the Elders.

## **ARTICLE VIII. BUSINESS MEETINGS**

### **Section 1**

Business meetings of the church will be called by the Elders for the purpose of transacting the business of the church. The purpose, agenda and time of regular meetings will be announced at least seven days in advance.

- A. An annual business meeting must be held and will at a minimum include:
  - a. Congregational selection of Elders and Deacons
  - b. Congregational affirmation of administrative positions deemed necessary and appointed by the Elders. Adminis-

trative positions of the church not filled by Deacons will be appointed by the Elders to serve for a one year term.

- c. A written report of all ministries during the previous calendar year.
- B. The annual budget meeting will be held in June for the congregational affirmation of the church's budget.
- C. Additional meetings may be called by the Elders as necessary throughout the year.

## **Section 2: Vacancies in Elected Positions**

Unexpected vacancies in elected positions may, at the discretion of the Elders, be filled by affirmation at a special business meeting.

## **Section 3: Meeting Procedures**

- A. Every active member eighteen years old and over will be eligible to vote.
- B. The quorum required to transact business at a duly called business meeting will be the active members present.
- C. All business will be decided by simple majority vote of those present and voting except when calling a paid Pastoral position or amending this constitution, in which case a 75% majority vote will be required.
- D. Accurate minutes of all business meetings of the church will be kept by the church secretary or someone designated at the meeting.
- E. The Elders will appoint a moderator for all business meetings.

## **ARTICLE IX FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION**

### **Section 1**

The expenses of the church will normally be covered by free-will gifts and offerings.

- A. The Fiscal Year will be July 1 – June 30.
- B. All designations will be non-binding suggestions.
- C. The Finance Team, upon the recommendation of the Elders, may authorize the transfer of funds from one fund to another. They shall report such transfers at the next regularly scheduled business meeting.

## **Section 2**

Only the property of the church can be used as a guarantee for the church's obligations.

## **Section 3**

No member can reclaim any part of the church's property.

## **Section 4**

This church will purchase, rent and sell the properties necessary for the fulfillment of the purposes established in Article II.

## **Section 5**

Financial debt will be placed on the church only upon approval of the congregation at a duly called business meeting.

## **Section 6: The Finance Team**

- A. A Finance Team is established to ensure oversight of the financial affairs of the church. The Team will consist of an Elder, a Deacon, the Treasurer, and other persons as needed.
- B. The Finance Team will have the responsibility to invest funds as directed by the church through the Elders.
- C. The Treasurer will have charge of the funds of the church and will see to the deposit of the same in the name of the church in local banks, will have oversight of the work of the bookkeeper and assure the payment of all vouchers or orders properly attested, and make a complete and accurate report of the finances of the church at each annual business meeting, or at any other time upon request by the Elders.
- D. The Financial Secretary will record and keep appropriate records of all contributions made to the church and provide receipts for tax purposes.
- E. Members of the Finance Team will be authorized to sign checks and may seek approval from the Elders for additional persons if deemed necessary. Two signatures will be required on all checks.
- F. All accounts of the church will be reviewed annually. The Finance Team will determine how the review is to be done. The report given to the Finance Team will be reviewed with the El-

ders and Deacons. A summary will be included with the annual report to the congregation.

- G. The Finance Team will be responsible to bring any non-budgeted disbursements of more than one percent of the annual budget before the congregation for approval.

## **ARTICLE X. AFFIRMATION & AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended as per Article VIII, Section 1, paragraphs A-D, provided that the amendment was read at a previous business meeting held at least two weeks prior to the meeting at which the vote will be taken.

This constitution must be reviewed and adopted at least every five years even if no changes are deemed necessary.

## **ARTICLE XI. DISSOLUTION**

In the event the church membership should vote to dissolve itself, no part of the net earnings of this corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any donor, member, director, or officer; nor shall any private individual be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporate assets. All assets of the church shall be distributed to one or more exempt organizations with like doctrinal positions and within the meaning of section 501c(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal code. The selection of the exempt organizations will be decided by the active members present at a duly called meeting.





## Appendices

### Grace Bible Church Profile

What are the identifying characteristics of Grace Bible Church? This question could best be answered by the following statements of commitment:

#### **WE ARE COMMITTED TO...**

***1. Being intentionally independent and non-denominational in name.***

The circumstances that God used to bring about the birth of this church led to a strong desire to be an autonomous local church completely submitted to the headship of Christ, independent of any denominational label, and free from any outside hierarchy.

***2. Being a place of welcome and embrace for those wounded in life.***

We believe that the church should be a place where the grace and love of God are manifested through our lives towards everyone. We believe that grace and forgiveness are offered to all who embrace Christ. Therefore, we have been a place where those who have been wounded and scarred in various life circumstances are welcomed, embraced, and, upon salvation, are treated as co-heirs in Christ.

***3. Having the discipleship of believers a top priority in our strategy for ministry.***

We believe that our mission as a local church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ, by first introducing them to the Savior, and then by developing each new-born disciple toward maturity and Christ-likeness.

***4. Being actively involved in global missions.***

We believe that Christ's command to go in to all the world to witness for Him and preach the gospel can be effectively accomplished through our partnership with missionaries and mission works here and around the world. It has been our practice for many years to have at least 10% percent of our annual unified budget dedicated to global missions work.

**5. *Emphasizing event and personal evangelism of our family, friends, neighbors and our world.***

We are committed to equipping each Christ-follower to actively participate in reaching people with the gospel. We seek to provide a balanced emphasis between an event oriented approach and personal involvement to reach the lost for Jesus Christ.

**6. *Being generous in our giving, believing it to be an act of worship to God.***

We believe that God is the provider of all that we have, and that He is glorified as we give back to Him from the first fruits of what He has blessed us. We believe that true joy is found in generosity that flows from thankful hearts, and that God is pleased in our pursuit of excellence and in our commitment to quality care.

**7. *Ministering to each member of the family unit.***

We believe that the family is a divine institution that the church is to value, protect, and promote in health, strength and harmony. It is our commitment to minister to the family in its entirety and each integral part, and we seek to accomplish this through a variety of settings.

**8. *Having musical excellence and quality, as well as an appreciation and blend of different styles.***

We believe that music is a gift from God through which our hearts can be drawn to Him in worship as we magnify Who He is. We are committed to a continual pursuit of excellence, and we seek to have a blend of hymns and contemporary praise choruses that are biblically sound in lyrics, and musically moderate in style.

**9. *In terms of polity & practice, we are Baptist***

In terms of polity and practice in this local assembly, we recognize ourselves to be aligned with the basic historic Baptist tradition and would agree with the following tenants:

- Biblical Authority
- Autonomy of the Local Church
- Priesthood of Believers
- Two Offices-Pastors and Deacons
- Individual Soul Liberty
- Saved Church Membership
- Two Ordinances
- Separation of Church and State



**GRACE**  
**BIBLE CHURCH**

HELPING PEOPLE FIND AND FOLLOW JESUS

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