

The Constitution of



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Constitution of Grace Chapel

West Liberty, Ohio

INTRODUCTION

We, the members of Grace Chapel, do ordain and establish the following Constitution to which we voluntarily submit.

ARTICLE I – OUR CHURCH

A. Our Name

The name of this assembly of believers in Jesus Christ shall be Grace Chapel.

B. Our Purpose

In furtherance of the purposes contained in the Articles of Incorporation, as amended and restated, Grace Chapel exists to glorify God through making, maturing, and mobilizing disciples of Jesus Christ by the word, throne, and fellowship of grace (Eph. 3:21; Matt. 28:19; Rom. 10:17; Matt. 19:25-26; John 13:35; 1 Cor. 14:24-25; Col. 1:28; Acts 20:32; Heb. 4:15; Eph. 4:29, 4:12; Col. 4:6; Luke 24:7; Rom. 10:15; Acts 4:20; Luke 10:2; Heb. 10:24-25).

ARTICLE II – OUR BELIEFS

A. Our Statement of Faith

Scripture

The Bible, containing the 66 books of the Old and New Testament, is God's perfect Word. It is completely trustworthy, without error in its original manuscripts, perfectly sufficient, and our only infallible rule of faith and practice. We believe the Holy Scriptures to be the VERBAL PLENARY INSPIRED WORK OF GOD, absolutely authoritative and infallible in the original manuscripts, and altogether sufficient in themselves as our only infallible rule of faith and practice. (Jn. 10:35, 17:17; II Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:21)

The Triune God

We believe in on God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, co-equal. (Matt. 28:19; Jn. 1:11, 4:24, 5:23-26, 10:30)

God the Father

We believe in God the Father, perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom, measureless in power. We rejoice that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men; that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 11:33; I Cor. 8:6; I Tim. 6:15; Titus 3:4-6; I Pet. 1:3, 15-16; I Jn. 5:15)

God the Son

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, and in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood; in His bodily resurrection; and in His ascension to the right hand of the Father; and in His personal, pre-millennial return to power and glory, according to His promise. We believe His present work is that of High Priest, Advocate and Intercessor; in which capacity He appears before the face of God on our behalf. (Isa.53:5-6; Matt. 20:28; Lk. 24:36-43; Jn. 20:25-28; Acts 1:11; Gal.3:13; I Thess. 4:16-17; Titus 2:11-13; Heb. 9:24; I Jn. 2:1)

God the Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, Who, having come forth from God, convinces the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment: Who also regenerates, sanctifies, comforts, indwells, enlightens, empowers, baptizes, guides, and teaches all who become children of God through Christ. (Gen. 1:2; Matt. 28:19; Jn. 16:8-11; Rom. 8:14; I Cor. 3:16, 6:19)

Satan

We believe in the existence and personality of Satan. Satan is a created angel who incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator, involving numerous angels in his fall. He introduced sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve. He is the prince of this world who was defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and will be eternally condemned to the lake of fire. (Gen. 3:1-15; Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:11-19; Jn. 12:31; Rom. 16:20; Eph. 2:2; II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6, Rev. 12:9, 20:10)

The Creation of the World and Humanity

We believe that God, solely by an act of His sovereign power and grace, and for the manifestation of His glory, brought the universe and everything in it into existence, out of nothing. We believe that Genesis 1-2 is a factual and literal account of God's creation of the world and humanity; that God directly formed Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from Adam's side; they were the historical parents of the entire human race; and they belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. (Gen. 1:1, 1:26-28, 1:31, 2:7, 2:22, 3:20; Isa. 43:7; Psalm 19:1; Jn. 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:22; Heb. 11:3)

Humanity's Fall into Sin

We believe that man was created in innocence but fell in Adam and is now totally unable to redeem himself. That all men by nature and by choice are sinners; that men became sinners through the fall of Adam; that Adam sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God; that those descended from Adam are born with a sinful nature and in the case of those who reach moral responsibility become sinners in thought, word and deed. (Gen. 1:26-28, 3:1-24; Jn. 8:42-44; Rom. 3:19, 23, 5:12; Eph. 2:3)

Humanity's Need for Salvation

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful men, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential. We believe in salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore, that those who accept Christ as Lord and Savior will rejoice forever in God's presence and those who refuse to accept Christ as Lord and Savior will be forever separated from God. (Matt. 25:46; Jn. 3:16; Acts 13:38-39, 16:31; I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:8-9; Jude 13; Rev. 20:11-15, 22:11)

The Resurrection of the Dead

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation. (Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:29; Acts 25:15; I Cor. 15; II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21-23; I Jn. 3:2; Rev. 21-1-6)

The Status of Believers

We believe that every human being is directly responsible to God alone; and that only those who truly receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are born of God. We believe that they are made partakers of the Divine Nature by the incoming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit and are sealed with the Holy Spirit that these believers are kept by the power of God and that they will be presented faultless before the presence of His glory. (Jn. 1:11-13, 3:3, 5:24, 10:28-29, 14:17,23; Rom. 8:16, 38-39; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30; Phil. 1:16; Col. 3:4; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 1:12; I Pet. 1:3-5; II Pet. 1:4; Jude 24; Rev. 3:20)

The Holiness of Believers

We further believe in righteous living and missionary effort. That good works does not produce salvation in any sense, but that it is proper evidence and fruit of the new birth. (Jn. 15; Acts 1:8; Titus 2:14)

Separation from Sin

We further believe in separation from the world; and that the righteous are called into a life of separation from all worldly and sinful practices. (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:3-11; James 4:4; I Jn. 2:15-18)

Dignity of Human Life

We believe that God created mankind in his image, which distinguishes humanity from any other creature. Therefore, from the moment of conception to natural death, every human person should be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Gen. 1:27, 2:18-20; Ps. 139:13; Jer. 1:5; Mark 12:28-31; Lk. 6:31)

Mankind as Male and Female

We believe God created mankind as male and female, two distinct sexes of humanity which complement and complete each other with each reflecting God's character and glory. The sex of each individual human is ordained by God and cannot be changed or altered by human will. The willful suppression, denial, or alteration of one's sex is sinful and offensive to the Lord. (Gen. 1:27; 1 Cor. 11:11; 1Tim. 2:8-15)

Marriage and Family

We believe that marriage was ordained by God and is not a construct of individual or societal will. God has decreed marriage to be the joining of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. Within the marriage relationship God has ordained that husband and wife assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising leadership and authority in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to and obeying her husband in a way that models the love of the church for the Lord. (Gen. 2:18, 21-24; Matt. 19:5; Eph. 5:22-33)

Human Sexuality

We believe God designed sexual intimacy to be expressed between a man and a woman who are married to each other, both for the purposes of producing offspring as well as for the mutual joy and sexual fulfillment of the married couple. We also believe God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. Any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, or pornography is sinful and offensive to God. (Gen. 1:28, 4:1; Ex. 20:14; Lev. 18:6-18, 22; Deut. 27:21; Prov. 5:18-19; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thes. 4:3-4; Heb. 13:4)

The Church

We believe that the church is the body of which Christ is the Head, and all born again believers are the particular members. We believe in the one true church; a living and spiritual body of which Christ is the head and of which all regenerated people are members. We believe that a visible church is a company of believers in Jesus Christ; baptized on a credible confession of faith, and associated for worship, work, fellowship, prayer, teaching, a united testimony, and the observance of the ordinances of our Lord; and that God has laid on these churches the task of persuading the lost world to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and to enthrone Him as Lord and Master. (Matt. 28:19-20; Lk. 17:20-21; Jn. 20:19-22; Acts 2:42-47)

The Great Commission

We believe that the Church, composed of all who have been born again through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, is commissioned to teach and preach the Gospel to all nations and to be evangelistic in its work and in its spirit. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Jn. 3:1-8)

Autonomy of the Local Church

We believe in the autonomy and independence of the local church; and that we must be kept free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; and that therefore, church and state must be kept separate as having different functions; each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.

Elders

We believe that Jesus Christ alone is head of the church, and that He governs His church through His elders who are designated by Him as *shepherds*, *overseers* and *stewards* and to whom Christ commands submission. These are endowed by His Spirit with gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. It is the duty of the church to seek and discover among its members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts and qualifications for this ministry and, after congregational selection and Biblical examination by the elders, to set them apart to this ministry by united prayer.

Whereas in new or small congregations only one man may have the gifts necessary to his being recognized as an elder, the evidence of the New Testament points to a plurality of elders in a given local church. These all are the "pastors and teachers" given to the church "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...". The Scriptural pattern is that pastoral responsibilities and authority be distributed among a "council of shepherds." (Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11-12; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:18; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)

We believe that this plurality does not mean that all elders are equal in their work or position in the church. While every elder should be "able to teach", some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching, while others will be more engaged in pastoring (that is, private teaching

and admonishing) and governing. Some will occupy the office as a vocation and thus be able to devote their lives to shepherding, while others, because of other employment, will shoulder only some of the shepherding responsibilities in the congregation. (I Tim. 3:2, 5:17)

Deacons

We believe that deacons are called by God to a ministry of "assisting" or "helping" the elders and the congregation. The deacons serve the eldership by assuming responsibility for those tasks assigned it by the elders - tasks that would interfere with the elders' ministry of the Word. They serve the congregation by overseeing the temporal needs of the church and the ministries of mercy and benevolence. It is the duty of the church to seek and discover among its members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts and graces for this ministry. (Acts 6:1-6; I Tim. 3:8-13)

Baptism

We believe that Christ instituted the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper to be observed by believers until He comes. We believe that Christian baptism by immersion in water is a solemn and beautiful emblem of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection; and consequently, shows forth the believers' death, burial, and resurrection to newness of life in Christ Jesus. It does not in any way take away sin. (Matt. 26:26-30, 28:19-20)

The Lord's Supper

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a provision of the bread and the cup, representing the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that we as believers partake of them in commemoration of His death, showing forth our faith and participation in the merits of His sacrifice, and our dependence on Him for spiritual life through His resurrection from the dead; and that its observance is to be preceded by faithful self-examination. (Matt. 26:26-29, 1 Cor. 10:16-17, 11:23-31)

B. Ordinances of the Church

Grace Chapel recognizes baptism and communion as ordinances of the church.

C. Other Beliefs

Our Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs and they are not intended to set a limit regarding the doctrines which define us as a congregation. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe.

D. Interpretive Authority

For purposes of Grace Chapel's understanding of our core faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the elders of Grace Chapel are the church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

ARTICLE III – OUR MEMBERSHIP

A. Definitions and Requirements

All who have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior immediately become members of the body of Christ and are therefore eligible to become part of the local expression of Christ's body, the local church. The requirements for joining the fellowship of believers at Grace Chapel are as follows. (1 Cor. 12:13 & Acts 2:41)

- I. Anyone who has received the Lord Jesus Christ as his/her own personal Savior, providing evidence of true conversion by his/her daily walk, and who affirms and abides by the statement of faith and covenantal responsibilities set forth in this constitution, and
- II. who has been baptized subsequent to their conversion, and
- III. who submits to the Constitution of this local assembly, agrees to joyfully submit oneself to the spiritual care of fellow believers and to the spiritual authority of the elders at Grace Chapel. (Heb.13:17)

B. Church Covenant

As faithful followers of Jesus Christ, we seek to not only proclaim the message of the Gospel, but also to be personally transformed by it. While the *Statement of Faith* provides the central beliefs we share and agree to live by as part of this community, the *Covenant & Commitment Statement* below outlines our pledge for living as redeemed members of Christ's community as we serve the Lord at Grace Chapel.

Covenant & Commitment Statement

Having been led by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we do now in the presence of God and this church most solemnly and joyfully enter into this Covenant with one another as one body in Christ. We seek God's grace and enablement in all things.

- I. To walk together in Christian love; (Rom.12:9-10; Gal. 5:13-15; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn. 4:9-11)
- II. To exercise Christian care and watchfulness over one another; (Prov. 27:17; Eph. 4; Col.3:16)
- III. To assemble regularly to encourage one another and to pray with and for one another, sharing our burdens, sorrows, and joys; (Gal. 6:2; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24-25)
- IV. To be thoughtful and courteous to one another, to be slow to take offense, and to be quick to forgive and to seek forgiveness; (Matt. 6:14-15, 18:21-35; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12-14)
- V. To guard the purity, peace, prosperity of the Church, through the guidance of the Scriptures, and to support its testimony as a witness to the saving grace of God and Christ Jesus; (Matt. 5:13-16; Rom. 14:19; Titus 2:7-8; Heb. 12:14)
- VI. To assist, through the gifts of the Spirit, in the work of the Church and to support its testimony as a witness to the saving grace of God and Christ Jesus; (Rom. 12:6-7; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Pet. 4:10-11)

- VII. To contribute, as the Lord directs, to the financial support of the Church, the relief of the needy, and the evangelism of all people; (Prov. 3:9; 1 Cor. 16:2)
- VIII. To love and to pray for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; (Matt. 18:18-22; 1 Thess. 5:17-18; James. 5:16)
- IX. To engage regularly in personal Bible reading and prayer, and to establish family devotions where possible; (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:2-3; 2 Pet. 3:18)
- X. To uphold the chastity of the unmarried and the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman; (Gen. 2:20-24; Mal. 2:13-16; Matt. 19:8-9; 1 Cor. 6:9-10, 6:18; Heb. 13:4)
- XI. To uphold the sanctity of life, from conception to death, as the unique image-bearers of God; (Ex. 1:15-17, 20-21; Ps. 139:13-16; Isa. 44:2)
- XII. To bring up such children as may be entrusted to our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; (Deut. 6:6-7; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4)
- XIII. To live with honesty and humility in the world, demonstrating God's kindness to all, to be faithful in engagements, exemplary in conduct, and denying ungodliness and sinful desires; (Gal. 6:10; Eph.2:10; 1 Pet. 2:11)
- XIV. To endeavor by example, by work, by prayer, and by the proclamation of Biblical teaching to the lost, to witness to others in order to make disciples of Jesus Christ; (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; 2 Tim. 4:1-4)
- XV. To purpose that when we remove ourselves from this place, we will as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this Covenant and the principles of God's word; (Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:24-25)

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

C. Membership Process

- I. Anyone who desires to become a member of the church shall meet with at least two elders, who are responsible to examine the individual's life and testimony for evidence of a true regeneration experience and for agreement with the doctrine and practice of the church (as outlined in Article III, Section A).
- II. Upon a unanimous vote of the elders, candidates may then be presented to the congregation at any worship or members meeting of the Church.
- III. No less than three-fourths (3/4) of the membership votes cast shall be required before an individual may be affirmed into membership.
- IV. Candidates who have been approved by the elders and affirmed by the membership shall be welcomed into the fellowship and shall receive at that time all the rights and privileges of membership.

D. Rights of Membership

- I. Members have the right to vote in all matters of the church business presented to the church for a vote (as outlined in Article IV, Section D).
- II. Members have the right to serve in positions of service that are reserved only for those in membership.
- III. Members have rights to view, but not copy, all member's meeting and church committee meeting minutes, as long as they are of a reasonable and proper purpose. Due to the sensitive nature of issues discussed in elders' meetings, the viewing for elder meeting minutes may be viewed during church office hours in the presence of an administrative assistant, pastor, or elder.

E. Associate and Youth Membership

I. Associate Membership

Members who affirm and abide by the statement of faith and covenantal responsibilities set forth in this constitution, but who are situated so that regular attendance is impracticable for a lengthy period of time, shall be designated as associate members by the elders. Examples include members unable to attend due to an extended convalescence; or members serving in the military, attending a college or University, or serving in the mission field. As long as they are not under the process of church discipline for restoration (as outlined in Article IV, Section G) associate members (though absent from regular attendance) shall be regarded as members in good standing (possessing all the rights and privileges of church membership), except they shall not have voting privileges nor be counted for the purposes of any quorum during their prolonged absence. Associate membership may be requested by a member in the expectation of a period of absence or designated by a vote of the elders after the member has been absent for six months. The elders shall attempt to contact the church member to confer about the member's situation before making a transfer to associate membership.

Once an associate member is able to return to regular participation and attendance, he or she may request a return to the regular membership. Regular membership and voting privileges shall be restored by a unanimous vote of the elders. Transfer of members to and from associate membership shall be announced at business meetings of the church.

II. Youth Membership

Individuals under the age of 18 who affirm and abide by the statement of faith and covenantal responsibilities set forth in the constitution and have undergone the membership process outlined in Article III, Section C, shall be regarded as youth members.

As long as they are not under the process of church discipline for restoration (as outlined in Article IV, Section G) youth members shall be regarded as members in good standing (possessing all the rights and privileges of church membership), except they shall not have voting privileges.

Once a youth member reaches the age of 18, he or she may request a transfer to regular membership at which time they shall undergo the membership process (as outlined in Article III, Section C).

F. Termination of Membership

I. Death

- a. Membership will be automatically terminated upon a member's death.

II. Resignation

- a. Any member may voluntarily resign from membership by submitting a request, in writing, to the elders. The elders may deny the request if only for purpose of proceeding with a process of spiritual restoration as described in Article III, Section G.

III. Transference

- a. Membership may be terminated by a unanimous vote of the elders if the member unites in consistent fellowship with another church.

IV. Absence

- a. Membership may be terminated by a unanimous vote of the elders if the member voluntarily and habitually absents themselves from the regular teaching/worship times of Grace Chapel for a period of three months (unless providentially hindered), or if they move from the area and give no indication of an intent to return to the area to maintain fellowship with Grace Chapel. The church will make a reasonable attempt to contact members prior to the removal of membership from Grace Chapel due to absence.

V. Discipline

- a. Membership may be terminated pursuant to the church discipline for restoration process as outlined in Article III, Section G.

G. Discipline for Restoration of Members

Our desire is to promote the spiritual growth of the members of our congregation. There can be times in our spiritual journey that we make wrong decisions and do not follow God's direction as set forth in the Bible. It is our intent to address sin issues among members of the body through the shepherding process. At these times, it becomes the responsibility of the Church to encourage, correct or even rebuke with the purpose of restoring the member's relationship with God.

I. The Purpose

The purpose of church discipline and restoration is...

- a. To affect a return to a Biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs through repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth (Gal. 6:1; Heb. 12:1-11; Prov. 29:15; Luke 17:3; Titus 1:13).

- b. To maintain purity in the local church as a whole (1Cor. 5:6-7; Eph. 5:11, 27).
- c. To deter others from sin (1 Tim. 5:20; Psalm 119:115; Prov. 13:20; 1 Thess. 5:14; Titus 1:11).
- d. To advance our corporate witness to non-Christians (Matt. 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:1-14; 1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Peter 2:2; 1 John 3:10); and
- e. Supremely, to glorify God by reflecting His glory and character (Deut. 5:11; John 15:8; Rom. 2:24; 15:5-6; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 1:4; 1 Peter 1:14-17; 2:12).

II. The Process

Any member of this church who opposes the welfare of the church, such as by being consistently neglectful of his or her duties, teaching in violation of the statement of faith, insisting on holding false doctrine, persistently conducting himself or herself in a manner inconsistent with Biblical teaching and dishonoring to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, or persistently disturbing the unity or peace of the church shall be pursued for the purposes of disciplinary restoration as follows, according to Matt. 18:15-18:

- a. Any member of this church who has knowledge of an erring member's heresy or misconduct shall warn and correct the erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
- b. If the erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two other members as witnesses to warn and correct, seeking repentance and restoration.
- c. If the erring member still refuses to heed the warning, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the elders, who, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall attempt to bring about restoration. If restoration cannot be accomplished, the elders shall call a members' meeting to encourage the congregation to pray for and seek the repentance and restoration of the erring member.
- d. If the erring member refuses to heed the warnings of the elders and the church, he or she shall be treated as an unbeliever pursuant to the Scriptures, by being formally removed from the church membership roll after the unanimous vote of the elders. After such a vote, the elders shall report their decision to the membership.
- e. There shall be no appeal of the discipline process or the dismissal to any court. The congregation shall be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring member. The discipline process will continue to conclusion whether the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership.

ARTICLE IV – OUR GOVERNMENT

A. Summary of Officers

The officers of Grace Chapel shall consist of the elders, the deacons, and any other elected positions.

B. Qualifications of Officers

- I. Officers of the church must be a member of the church in full fellowship for a period of at least one year, and in good standing (being not currently under the process of church discipline for restoration) before holding an office.
- II. Elders and deacons must be above reproach in their life and conduct and demonstrate the qualifications for their respective offices as given in I Tim. 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9.
- III. Any man who desires to serve as elder or deacon must give testimony to his faith and conduct and submit to examination by the elders to be considered for the office in which they would serve. Elder approval of officers shall be by a unanimous vote.

C. Duties & Descriptions of Officers

I. Elders

While the Bible teaches that a local church is overseen by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-2), it also acknowledges that certain elders will be recognized and remunerated for their commitment to oversight and labor, particularly in preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 Corinthians 9:14; Revelation 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14). Grace Chapel follows this established pattern of both paid (vocational) and unpaid (lay) elders.

a. Vocational Elders

i. Senior Pastor

a) Qualifications and Duties

1. An elder chosen to devote himself to the work of the ministry, to oversight of the church “full-time,” and to all other elder duties listed below under “Lay Elders, Duties” (with the exception of duties related to the oversight or absence of a pastor).
2. Adequately trained, skilled in public preaching, and thoroughly prepared to engage in this work of ministry as a livelihood (1 Timothy 5:17).
3. Functions as the appointed senior pastor who, with all other elders, leads the church through the careful application of the Word of God in all matters.
4. Committed to the public and private preaching of the Word of God in order that the saints might be completely equipped and fully mature (Acts 20:20; Ephesians 4:11-12; Colossians 1:28-29).
5. Functions as the lead shepherd and administrator of the church, working closely with the elders and deacons, church officers and committee chairmen. He will be responsible for oversight of, and day-to-day administration as delegated through the church staff.
6. Shall be directly accountable in all matters to the elders.

b) Nomination

When a pastoral vacancy exists or is anticipated, a Pastoral Search Committee will be called by a unanimous vote of the elders to locate a qualified candidate. The Committee shall present a qualified candidate to the church at a duly called members meeting.

c) Affirmation

No less than three-fourths (3/4) of the membership votes cast shall be required before a candidate may be received into membership (if not already a member) and assume office.

d) Term of Ministry

The senior pastor shall be affirmed to an indeterminate term.

ii. Additional Pastor(s)

As ministry heads require, additional pastors may be called or recognized to serve in a full or part-time capacity.

a) Qualifications and Duties

1. An elder chosen to devote himself to the work of the ministry and oversight of the church, and to all other elder duties listed below under "Lay Elders, Duties" (with the exception of duties related to the oversight or absence of a pastor).
2. Adequately trained and prepared to engage in this work of ministry.
3. Functions as a key ministry leader who, within his ministry role, helps to lead the church through the careful application of the Word of God in all matters.
4. In the absence of the senior pastor and as directed by the elders, an additional pastor may function as the lead shepherd and administrator of the church, under the oversight of the elders. Within this role he will be responsible for oversight of and day to day administration as delegated through the church staff.
5. Shall be directly accountable in all matters to the senior pastor.

b) Nomination

When a pastoral vacancy exists or is anticipated, a Pastoral Search Committee will be called by the elders to locate a qualified candidate. The Committee shall present a qualified candidate to the church at a duly called members' meeting.

c) Affirmation

No less than three-fourths (3/4) of the membership votes cast shall be required before a candidate may be received into membership (if not already a member) and assume office.

d) Term of Ministry

The additional pastor shall be affirmed to an indeterminate term.

b. Lay Elders

a) Qualifications

1. The qualifications for a man chosen to fill the office of elder are clearly set forth in Scripture, particularly 1 Tim. 2:12; 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
2. Any man who has been a member for at least one year, who desires to serve as an elder, and who after submitting to examination, and demonstrating that he possesses the qualifications set forth in Scripture, would be considered to be qualified to serve as an elder. (1 Timothy 3:1)

b) Duties

Since elders are given the responsibility of oversight, directing the affairs of the church, and managing them as a father would his family (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 3:4-5; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Their duties include:

1. Guarding the flock of God against error and heresy (Acts 20:28-31; II Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 1:9-11).
2. Careful admonition, confronting sin, teaching individuals and families as men who will have to give an account (Hebrews 13:17).
3. Counseling and private teaching and admonition (Ezekiel 34; Acts 20:20, I Thessalonians 5:12; Colossians 1:28).
4. Praying for the congregation and the work of God (Acts 6:3-4).
5. Equipping others for ministry (Eph. 4:11-16; II Tim. 2:2).
6. Preaching and teaching the Word of God (Col. 1:28; I Tim. 5:17; II Tim. 4:1-4).
7. Making sure that the Word of God is continually used as the foundational basis for all decisions and directions of the body. (Deut. 29:29; John 8:32; Acts 20:28-30; II Tim. 3:16-17).
8. Listening to the members of the church. The elders must remember that they are not lords but leaders and that the church is not composed of subjects, but gifted members. To that end, the elders will consider the input of the members when making decisions or setting policy. They shall receive, consider, and dispose of any grievance,

suggestion, or recommendation from any member or organization of the church.

9. Establishing the policies and practices for the church in matters pertaining to the entire body and shall approve the policies and practices of all committees, ministries, or organizations within the church body.
10. Leading in the discipline and reconciliation of erring members.
11. Selecting, encouraging, and counseling with all staff and employees of the church while prescribing duties for them and ensuring efficient functioning of the church through the efforts of Pastor and staff.
12. Determining the needed committees for the normal function of the ministry of the church. These may include a membership committee, missionary committee, maintenance committee, finance committee, auditing committee, and others as needed.
13. Overseeing the selection of any needed personnel for particular ministries, such as Treasurer, Clerk, committee members, etc.
14. Overseeing the Senior Pastor.
15. Overseeing the deacons.
16. Operating as ex-officio members of all councils and committees.
17. Administering the church services in the temporary absence of the Senior Pastor. This shall be the responsibility of the chairman of the elders, working with the Additional Pastor(s).
18. During the prolonged absence of the Senior Pastor, the elders shall make arrangements for pulpit supply and leadership for weekly prayer meetings.
19. The elders are servant leaders of the congregation and must give an account to the membership for their stewardship of ministry.
20. Hiring, discipline, and termination of employment of church staff.
21. Serve as legal overseers of the church.

c) Appointment of Affirmation

The elders shall identify men in the congregation who demonstrate the qualifications for eldership as described in I Tim. 2:12; 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. In addition, each member of the church family must examine carefully the Scriptural qualifications for elder. A standard recommendation form listing the biblical qualifications of an elder must be turned into the elders at least 6 weeks prior to the annual business meeting. It will include the name of the potential candidate for elder and a dated signature of the one making the recommendation. After careful examination, the elders shall

approve each nominee by a unanimous vote before he is placed on the ballot for eldership.

No less than three-fourths (3/4) of the membership votes cast shall be required for the affirmation of an elder.

d) Decisions

The elders shall strive toward unanimity when making decisions. Unless otherwise noted in this constitution, in cases where unanimity cannot be reached, they must make their recommendations to the church body by a majority vote consensus with no more than two dissenting votes. In weighty decisions, such as doctrinal or ethical concerns, the elders may choose to take a period of time for further prayer and consideration in order to pursue unanimity. (Ephesians 4:1-3 and Philippians 2:2).

e) Term of Ministry

The term of ministry shall not exceed three (3) years, so arranged as to expire in annual rotation. As long as the scriptural qualifications are met, an elder may be reaffirmed to a second consecutive three-year term. Upon the expiration of a second consecutive term, an elder must take a minimum sabbatical of one year.

If an elder finds it necessary to come off the elder board within his three-year term of service, he will be granted a sabbatical in which his term of serving on the elder board will be paused and put on temporary hiatus until such time as he believes he is able to serve again. Examples of reasons for sabbatical are a needed rest from oversight responsibilities, a time to re-evaluate personal walk, a family illness, etc. Notification will be given the church at the start and finish of any elder requested sabbatical.

f) Number

The church should endeavor to discover and then to formally recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite gifts and character qualities for the ministry of elder. It is evident, therefore, that the number of elders cannot be fixed by the church.

c. Removal and Reinstatement

a) Removal for Disqualification

While elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock, and therefore are subject to the same processes of discipline for restoration as the rest of the membership.

In addition, elders are called to live an exemplary life that is above reproach (I Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9). Therefore, each elder as an individual is under the oversight of his fellow church members and elders and is subject to this higher level of accountability. If an elder is found to be in sin, such as by being consistently neglectful of his membership duties, teaching in violation of the statement of faith, insisting on holding

false doctrine, persistently conducting himself in a manner inconsistent with Biblical teaching and dishonoring to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, or persistently disturbing the unity and peace of the church, and thereby not living in accordance with the Biblical standards of an elder, the matter shall be investigated by the remaining elders. If after careful examination the elders determine that there is sin that is confirmed by two or three witnesses, the elders shall call a congregational meeting and publicly rebuke the elder and recommend his removal from office (1 Tim. 5:19-20). A vote of no less than three-fourths (3/4) of the membership votes cast shall be required.

b) Reinstatement

The process of reinstatement for an elder who has been removed will be determined by the elders at a later time in relation to the circumstances and his qualification and desire to serve again. Reinstatement must be affirmed by a unanimous vote of the elders and then, at their recommendation, by a vote of no less than three-fourths (3/4) of the membership votes cast.

II. Deacons

a) Qualifications

The qualifications for a deacon are clearly enumerated in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

Any man who has been a church member for at least one year, who, after submitting to examination by the elders and demonstrating that he possesses the qualifications set forth in Scripture, would be considered to be qualified to serve as a deacon.

b) Duties

Since deacons are called by God to a ministry of "assisting" or "helping" the elders and the congregation, the deacons serve the eldership by assuming responsibility for those tasks assigned by the elders - tasks that would interfere with the elders' ministry of shepherding and overseeing through the word of God and prayer. They serve the congregation by overseeing the temporal needs of the church and the ministries of mercy and benevolence.

1. The deacons shall assist the elders in the serving of the elements of the Lord's Supper and assist in baptismal services (Acts 8:36-39).
2. The deacons shall maintain a "Benevolence Fund." The deacons shall be responsible in giving from this fund, communicating the needs and financial disbursements with the elders, but they need not give account to the church or make public their use of these monies except to give a general disclosure of income and disbursements at the regular meetings of the church.
3. The deacons are to care for the property of the church, repair, invest, and preserve the same.

4. The deacons shall aid in the general spiritual care of the church, especially giving themselves to the ministry of mercy, and perform other duties as assigned by the elders.
5. The deacons must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and subjection to the elders.
6. Deacons are directly accountable to the elders.

c) Appointment and Affirmation

1. Deacons

Each member of the church family must examine carefully the Scriptural qualifications for deacon. A standard recommendation form listing the biblical qualifications of a deacon must be turned into the elders at least 6 weeks prior to the annual business meeting. It will include the name of the potential candidate for deacon, an evaluation estimate of each item of character qualifications for the man being nominated, and a dated signature of the one making the recommendation. The elders must approve each nominee before he is placed upon the ballot.

2. Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Deacons

As officers of the church, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the deacons shall be approved by a unanimous vote of the elders.

No less than three-fourths (3/4) of the membership votes cast shall be required for the affirmation of any deacon, including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

d) Term of Ministry

The term of ministry shall not exceed three (3) years, so arranged as to expire in annual rotation. As long as the scriptural qualifications are met, a deacon may be reaffirmed to a second consecutive three-year term. Upon the expiration of a second consecutive term, a deacon must take a minimum sabbatical of one year.

If a deacon finds it necessary to come off the deacon board within his three-year term of service, he will be granted a sabbatical in which his term of serving on the deacon board will be paused and put on temporary hiatus until such time as he believes he is able to service again. Examples of reasons for sabbatical are: a needed rest from oversight responsibilities, a time to re-evaluate personal walk, a family illness, etc. Notification will be given the church at the start and finish of any deacon-requested sabbatical.

e) Number

The church should endeavor to discover and then to formally recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite gifts

and character qualities for the ministry of deacon. It is evident, therefore, that the number of deacons cannot be fixed by the church but will be determined by the elders according to the needs of the church body.

f) Removal

Deacons, like elders, must live lives that are above reproach (I Tim. 3:10), and therefore shall be subject to the same removal process as for elders (as outlined in Article IV, Section c).

g) Reinstatement

The process of reinstatement for a deacon who has been removed shall be the same reinstatement process as for elders (as outlined in Article IV, Section c).

III. Other Elected Positions

The church shall nominate and elect additional officers as needed. The other elected positions shall include the Treasurer and the Chairman of the Missionary Committee.

a) Appointment and Affirmation

As officers of the church, the Treasurer and the Chairman of the Missionary Committee shall be recommended by a unanimous vote of the elders and affirmed by a vote of no less than three-fourths (3/4) of the membership votes cast. As officers, the Treasurer and Missions Committee Chairman shall report to the elders of the church.

b) Term

The Treasurer shall be elected for a three-year term and shall be eligible to be re-elected consecutively.

The Missions Committee Chairman shall be elected for a three-year term and shall be eligible for re-election for one additional three-year term. After the second three-year term, the Missions Committee Chairman must take a minimum sabbatical of one year.

c) Removal

As officially recognized servants of the church, other elected officers shall be subject to the same removal process as for elders (as outlined in Article IV, Section c).

D. Meetings of the Membership

I. Worship Meetings

- a. Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.

II. Members' Meetings

a. Regular Members' Meetings:

- i.** There shall be a regular members' meeting at least once a quarter at a time agreed upon by the congregation.
- ii.** Members shall have the privilege of voting on all major issues that impact the values, vision, and direction of Grace Chapel, as defined by the list provided below. The date, time, and voting items of any members' meeting shall be announced two weeks prior to the meeting.
- iii.** Members must be at least 18 years of age to vote on church matters. Youth members, upon turning 18, will be allowed to vote upon following the membership process in Article III, Section C. While the elders may present other matters, at its discretion, to the congregation for a vote, they must allow members in good standing (being not currently under the process of church discipline for restoration) the opportunity to vote on the following:
 - a)** The affirmation of individuals to our fellowship by church membership.
 - b)** The affirmation of candidates to the positions of Senior Pastor, Assistant Pastor, Elder, Deacon, and other elected positions outlined in this Constitution.
 - c)** Amendments to the Constitution.
 - d)** Commissioning and/or financial support of missionaries.
 - e)** The annual budget.
 - f)** Non-budgeted expenditures exceeding 2% of the annual budget. Deacons and/or elders may act at their own discretion in cases of emergency, but it is their responsibility to report the expense and the reason for its necessity to the congregation in a timely manner.
 - g)** Buying, selling, or encumbering of real property.
- iv.** Typically, business items will be voted upon at a scheduled quarterly or special members meeting. It is desired that the membership be in attendance to hear explanation, discussion, and questions surrounding issues voted on. If, however, a member will be unable to attend the members meeting, absentee voting is allowed within the following guidelines:
 - a)** Only members in good standing, as defined in the Membership section (Article III) of this constitution (being not currently under the process of church discipline for restoration), will be allowed to vote.
 - b)** In advance of each vote, the church staff will create a list of members in good standing (being not currently under the process of church discipline for restoration).

- c) Absentee votes are to be filled out on paper and delivered to the church office staff.
- d) Members absentee voting will be annotated on a voting list for each meeting.
- e) A list of those who voted absentee will be compared with the membership attendance list to ensure that no one inadvertently votes twice, and the number of absentee votes will be given to the moderator.

b. Special Members' Meeting:

- i. Special members' meeting may be called as required by the elders. The date, time, and voting items of any special members' meeting shall be announced two weeks prior to the meeting.

c. Quorum

- i. Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members.
- ii. Unless otherwise noted, all decisions shall require a simple majority vote of the votes cast.
- iii. Three-fourths (3/4) of the membership votes cast shall be required for amendments to the church constitution and for the affirmation of pastors, assistant pastors, elders, deacons, treasurer, missions committee chairman, and missionaries.

E. Monetary Expenditures

No board or committee shall make monetary expenditures in excess of their annual budget allocation without approval by the elders. Such expenditures shall be reported to the membership at a members' meeting of the church.

F. Unity of the Fellowship

When Grace Chapel members disagree or their interpretations differ, we pray that the love of Christ will guard our attitudes toward one another so that we exhibit a genuine concern for the building up of all God's people in an atmosphere of love.

G. Church Policy Manual

The elders, and others whom they authorize, shall maintain a church policy manual to document practices and procedures that are important to the ministries of Grace Chapel, which are not included in the church constitution.

Policies and policy changes must be submitted to the elders for approval and should receive input from those directly involved in each specific area of ministry. Examples include church leadership positions, committees, facility usage, and the use of church property. New policies or policy changes may be recommended by individuals involved in a particular ministry, or at the request of the elders.

After a proposal is approved by the elders, the policy change will be posted for 30 days to inform the membership and gain additional input from the membership prior to amending the official policy manual in the church office.

H. Committees

Whenever the need arises, the elders may establish new committees, or make changes to the current committees, for the purpose of the ministries of the church. Any committees of the church and their responsibilities shall be outlined in the church Policy Manual.

I. Leadership Positions

Whenever the need arises, the elders may establish new leadership positions, or make changes to the current positions, for the purpose of the ministries of the church. Any leadership positions of the church and their responsibilities shall be outlined in the church Policy Manual.

ARTICLE V – AFFILIATED MINISTRIES

The church shall affiliate themselves with ministries of like faith and practice. Participation in fellowships and ministries affiliated with the church shall be decided the elders. Examples include: Crisis Pregnancy Centers, Non-Denominational Church Fellowships, and temporary multi-church evangelistic efforts.

A. Missions

A missionary interest both at home and abroad shall be promoted extensively in this church. We will endeavor to channel all of our missionary offerings into evangelical, Bible-believing, Christ-centered mission boards (or church acting as a mission board). All missionary funds shall be directly designated to the missionary objective, whether giving through a mission board or directly to the missionary.

B. Ordination

It shall be the purpose of this church to ordain into the gospel ministry, those men whom God has called and equipped. Requests for ordination to the gospel ministry shall not be considered until the applicant shall have been licensed by the church to preach for a period of one year. Requests for a license to preach shall not be considered until the applicant shall have been a member of the church for a period of one year. Requests for a license to preach shall not be considered until the applicant shall have been a member of the church for a period of one year. Authority by vote of the congregation shall be necessary to call ordination councils and issue proper credentials. The ordination council shall thoroughly examine all applicants for ordination as to their call to the Christian ministry, education, Christian experience, reputation, character, doctrinal belief, and demonstrated efficiency in Christian service.

ARTICLE VI -AMENDMENTS

No alteration or amendment shall be made to this Constitution unless the proposed alteration or amendment is submitted in writing, publicly posted, and recommended to the congregation by the elders, at least one month prior to voting. Public announcement of the upcoming vote must be made for two consecutive Sundays prior to the members meeting. Any amendment must be voted on and accepted by three-fourths (3/4) of the membership votes cast.

A current copy of the Constitution will be available for review in the Grace Chapel office. A paper copy will be maintained by the church staff and a current electronic copy will be available on the publicly accessible Grace Chapel website.

ARTICLE VII – INDEMNIFICATION

All those serving at Grace Chapel as pastors, paid Staff, and Officers shall be indemnified against all expenses, limited by the financial ability of the church, actually or necessarily incurred by said workers in connection with the defense of any action, suit or proceeding to which they have been made a party by reason of being or having been such a worker except in relation to matters as to which said workers shall be adjudicated in such action, suit or proceeding to be liable for gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of duty. The elders shall have final discretion in determining qualification for indemnification.

ARTICLE VIII – CHRISTIAN MEDIATION

A. Submission to Mediation

Members of this church agree to submit any legal dispute with the church for mediation before a mutually agreed-upon mediator who affirms our church's statement of faith, or if none can be agreed upon, one selected by Peacemaker Ministries. Lawsuits between believers, or threats of lawsuits between believers, are a matter of grave concern for the church, are contrary to biblical and church teaching, and mediation is an effort to resolve disputes in a biblical fashion (1 Cor. 6:1-7).

B. Mediation Procedures

Mediation will be governed by the *Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation (ICC Rules), unless modified as stipulated by the parties. In particular, subject to the more detailed provisions of the ICC Rules, mediator(s) will attempt to assist us in reaching a voluntary settlement of any disputes through mediation. The confidentiality of the mediation process will be protected, and these matters will not be discussed with people who do not have a necessary interest in them. If settlement can be agreed upon, the conciliators may, at their discretion, issue an advisory opinion. Neither the opinion, nor any communications exchanged in the mediation process, will be admissible for any purpose in any subsequent legal proceeding.

ARTICLE IX – DISSOLUTION

In the event that Grace Chapel, due to circumstances such as low attendance or finances, can no longer sustain viable ministry, the remaining membership, by majority vote, may choose to dissolve. Upon the dissolution, the remaining membership shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the church, evenly dispose by majority vote all assets of the church among the church-supported missionaries, past or present, or any other non-profit, like-minded Christian ministries. Recipients of said assets shall be in harmony with the evangelical beliefs contained in the Constitution. No assets shall accrue to the benefit of any member(s).