



GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

Constitution

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Article 1: ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Section 1 Name

The name of this local congregation shall be Grace Baptist Church of Cedarville, Ohio, founded in 1954 and incorporated August 14, 1961, (hereafter referred to as “the church”).

Section 2 Nonprofit Purpose

The church is organized exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code. In furtherance of such purposes, the church shall have full power and authority to perform all acts necessary or incidental to the above to carry out the purposes of the church as set forth in the Articles of Incorporation, including the exercise of all other power and authority enjoyed by corporations generally by virtue of the provisions of Ohio law.

Section 3 Offices

The church shall continuously maintain a registered office within the State of Ohio. The principal office of the church shall be located at such a place determined by the Board of Directors. The church clerk shall function as Statutory Agent.

Article 2: PURPOSE, MISSION, AND GOAL

The purpose of Grace Baptist Church is to exalt the name of God the Father,¹ increase the fame of Jesus Christ,² and fan the flame of the Holy Spirit.³

To this end, our mission is to develop, through biblical community, disciples who learn God’s Word, live God’s way, and light God’s world.⁴

Our goal is to become a biblical community of maturing disciples.⁵

Article 3: CHURCH COVENANT

We are the people of Grace Baptist Church.

We believe that God the Father has called us to faith in his Son, Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit; we are now part of the universal church and a local body of Christ.

We commit ourselves to exalt the name of God the Father, increase the fame of Jesus Christ, and fan the flame of the Holy Spirit among ourselves and all people everywhere.

We accept our mission to learn God’s Word, live God’s way, and light God’s world, and in so doing become a biblical community of maturing disciples.

¹ Mt 6:9; Jn 12:28; 14:13; 15:8; 17:1

² Jn 12:32; Acts 4:12; 5:42; 1 Cor 1:17-23; Phil 1:18

³ Mt 3:11; Acts 2:3, 16ff.; Eph 5:18,19; 2 Tim 1:6-7

⁴ 2 Tim 2:15; Eph 2:10; 1 Jn 1:7; Mt 5:16; Phil 2:15

⁵ Acts 2:42-47; Heb 10:24-25

We will promote a culture of repentance for our sin, worship of our God, transformation of our lives, community among ourselves, service to others, and mission to the world.⁶

We will accomplish these through regular worship, participation in community groups, and service in ministry together

We will strive to find our greatest joy in living for God's glory,⁷ to submit and be changed by the Word and the Spirit of God, to be fully committed to the good of Christ's Body, and to seek to reach others with the Good News about Jesus Christ.

We acknowledge that we cannot do these ourselves, but depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit and commit to use the means God provides to experience that power: the Word and prayer. We will give sacrificially of our time, our abilities, and our resources as well.

We ask God to enable us to live out this covenant, and we acknowledge the responsibility of our spiritual leaders to guide us, and our brothers and sisters in Christ to hold us accountable in its fulfillment.

Article 4: ARTICLES OF FAITH

Section 1 Essentials of Faith

The following points of our doctrinal statement represent those truths believers through the ages have considered essential for orthodox Christian faith as given in the Scriptures. This church requires affirmation of these truths for membership.

The Scriptures

The Bible is actually God's Word given to His people. Every concept and every word were recorded exactly as God intended because His Holy Spirit worked through the men who wrote the original books. Because these words are ultimately God's, they are absolutely truthful, accurate, and without error. This is why we happily depend upon the Bible as the basis for how we think about God and His world (theology) and for how we behave (ethics). We also consider translations of the Bible that accurately reflect the intent and words of the original languages to be the Word of God. *It is our privilege to seek to understand God's message and apply it responsibly to our lives as well as to share it in relevant ways with others* (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Matt. 24:35).

The True God

There is only one living and true God, without limits, separate from sin and His creation, sovereign, everywhere-present, all-powerful, all-knowing, and eternal. We believe that God is the loving Creator and Sustainer of all that exists, both seen and unseen. God exists as the Trinity in three persons yet one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While each person is fully and equally God in every way, each has unique functions to fulfill. This teaching is a mystery to man but is clearly taught in the Bible. *Though He has no needs, God passionately desires a relationship with us and towards this end continually invites us into a relationship of faith and a life of obedience, learning, and service* (Exodus 20:2-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Matt. 3:16-17).

⁶ Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8

⁷ 1 Cor 10:31; Phil 3:1, 4:4

The Son of God

We believe in the absolute deity of Jesus; that is, He is and always was fully God. He has existed as an equal person with the Father and the Spirit throughout eternity. He took on humanity and a body through miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit in Mary, who was a virgin. During His earthly life and even now, He is both fully God and fully human. It is the unique role of Jesus to reveal the other members of the Godhead and to provide salvation for the world through His death and resurrection. After His resurrection, Jesus returned to heaven to be our advocate in the Father's presence and to prepare a heavenly home for His people whom He will gather together to be with Him when He returns at the end of this age. *Jesus is, therefore, the only way we can come to God and have a relationship with Him. In His life He modeled how He desires us to live* (John 1:1-2,18; 1 John 5:20; Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:26-38; Heb. 1:1-2; John 14:1-7; 1 John 2:1).

The Holy Spirit

We believe in the absolute deity of the Holy Spirit equal with the Father and the Son and yet enjoying a unique role. With regard to all people, including the lost, He convicts us of sin, teaches the perfect way God desires man to live, and warns of the judgment for failing to do so. With regard to believers, He calls out a community of people to demonstrate to the world the power of the good news of Jesus. He lives inside all who believe in Jesus. He teaches, comforts, and empowers us, giving each follower diverse gifts, fostering unity, interdependence, productivity, Christ-like character, and love among Christians. *By dependence upon the Holy Spirit, we have the opportunity of demonstrating the power of God to create a new community that experiences and expresses the kingdom of heaven* (2 Cor. 13:14; John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:14-17).

The Nature and Fall of Man

Men and women are created in and reflect God's image: we have the ability to think, to choose, and to feel. The abilities to reason, strategize, plan, appreciate beauty, "create" in terms of literature, music, and art, and to experience joy and heartache are all traceable to God's image stamped on each human being. Because God is a trinity, we are inherently designed for relationships both toward man and God. Because we are created, we are finite creatures who have limits and are completely dependent upon the Creator.

Adam and Eve, who were created with the freedom to choose, were tempted by Satan and voluntarily chose to rebel against God. Adam's sin plunged them and their descendants into condemnation and death. Now all their offspring are sinful from the very beginning of life and become practical sinners with the first expression of personal choice and so are without excuse before God. Adam's sin mars the image of God in man so that our reasoning, choices, and feelings are colored by sin. *Because each person is created in God's image, each has intrinsic value. We seek to participate in God's work of restoring each person to the full image of God* (Gen. 1:26-27; 3:1-26; Psalm 51; Rom. 5:10-19; Col. 1:28,29; 3:10).

Salvation

Our relationship with God was ruined by Adam's choice, and the restoration of our relationship can only be accomplished through the reconciling work of Jesus, the sinless and perfect human being (who was also God), who took the punishment that was due us for our sin when He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross. The blessings of a restored relationship with God are freely given on the grounds of grace alone to all who put their trust in Him. Belief in Jesus means that having acknowledged our own sinfulness and rebellion against God, we now call upon the Lord Jesus to forgive us, and we entrust our lives to His direction and care. We trust that Jesus' death is alone sufficient to pay the penalty for our sin and to restore our relationship with God and that Jesus also provides the example and teaching for us to follow to enjoy our renewed relationship

with God. The Bible teaches that the person who believes in Jesus is justified; that is, he is declared to be right with God as Christ's right living is credited to him while his sin and condemnation has been placed upon Christ at the cross. *The most important dividing line within humanity is between those who still live under God's judgment, and those who have been set free from condemnation through Jesus' death on the cross in their place. There are only two possible states of existence, with two radically different outcomes. This means the message of salvation through Jesus is the focal point of Christian teaching and mission* (Rom. 3:21-31; 10:9-13; John 3:1-7; **I Cor. 15:17**; Titus 3:5-7).

The Church

We believe that the true church is composed of all those who, through saving faith in Jesus Christ, are united together in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. Each local church is a visible extension of the body of Christ in a given place. A local church is composed of believers who are bound together in common faith and obedience to Jesus, who teach the Word of God, and who observe the ordinances of Christ. These believers are governed by the New Testament and are answerable to Christ. The offices of the church are elders (also called overseers and pastors) and deacons. *As Christ's body, the church in both universal and local forms is to do on earth what Jesus would do if He were here. The community of believers who make up a local church are also to model their shared life through manifesting Christ's love toward each other and serving each other with the enabling gifts given by the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:41-42; Eph. 1:22-23; 3; 4:1-16; 1 Tim. 3; Col. 1:18).

Section 2 Historic Distinctives

Within Christian history, divergent views on doctrinal issues have emerged even among true Christian believers. This church, recognizing its responsibility to teach the whole counsel of God, affirms the following doctrines as accurate expressions of biblical truth, and will teach only these views of the subjects in question. Members must abide under these teaching positions. In cases where different groups of Christians may hold other views, we will hold our views with charity as well as clarity.

Sanctification

We believe that all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are set apart by God as His own unique people. This act, called sanctification, is also a process that continues throughout the earthly life of the believer. We are given a new set of desires, motivations, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit, and as inheritors of eternal life, we are eternally secure in Christ. This means that we experience a new beginning and new life that we can never lose. It also means that the life and character of each believer will inevitably change as we are conformed to the character of Jesus throughout our lives. The lack of such change of character is cause to question the validity of one's salvation. *Sanctification means not only that we separate ourselves from false doctrine and conduct as Jesus did, but also that we engage the culture with the heart and mind of Christ while we pursue holiness. Further, we evidence sanctification by extending grace towards genuine believers with whom we disagree on non-essential matters of the faith. We should make every effort to mature in Christian character* (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:28-39; 1 John 3:1-10; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Ordinances of the Church

We believe that there are two church ordinances, or observances, that were given by the Lord Jesus to the church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water and serves as a powerful testimony of identification with Christ's death and resurrection and of cleansing from sin for a believer after conversion. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic meal instituted by the Lord Himself as a frequent reminder of His death. *Baptism and communion provide two powerful testimonies of the saving work of Christ. Baptism serves as a public declaration of the*

beginning of a new life while in communion the believer continually reaffirms his faith in God's salvation (1 Cor. 11:23-30; Luke 22:14-20; Acts 2:41; 8:35-39).

God's Direct Creation

God created the heavens and the earth, including all life by direct act and not by the process of evolution. He completed His work in six literal consecutive days and rested on the seventh. *God's creatorship means that He owns the earth and all its inhabitants. As stewards of both our lives and the earth, we value life and are accountable to Him for the way we invest our lives and treat His creation* (Genesis 1:1-2:4; Col. 1:16-17; John 1:3).

Satan

Satan, also called "the Devil," is a distinct person who was created without sin, but subsequently rebelled against the Creator. He currently engages in conflict against God and His work and is the ruling power of this age. However, Satan, as a created being, is limited to actions permitted by God. Satan will be defeated by God and is destined for eternal judgment in the lake of fire. *We should expect that conflict with the evil one should be a normal part of our lives, and that we need continual protection and provision from God in daily living* (Job 1:10-12; 2:5-7; Matt. 4:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:10-18; Rev. 20:10).

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Spiritual gifts are empowerments for service to the body of Christ given when the Holy Spirit comes into the life of the believer at conversion. Miraculous signs and gifts were given during the early days of the Church to authenticate the apostles as Jesus' representatives but were not intended to be a pattern for the present day. *God gives spiritual gifts for the benefit of the local body of Christ* (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

Future Things

The Bible clearly teaches that the future victory of God's kingdom is assured. Jesus has promised to return for His people in triumph at the end of history. Following the resurrections of the saved and unsaved, God will judge all those who are not His children, and because their sin condemns them, He will sentence them to a never-ending, conscious punishment in the lake of fire. Those who are God's children have the promise of a never-ending life in His presence in what is called "heaven" and "the new heavens and the new earth."

We believe in the bodily and personal return of Jesus Christ for the Church in an event called the rapture before a seven-year tribulation period. At the close of this period He will establish a literal reign upon the earth for 1,000 years in fulfillment of prophecy. *Our confidence in God's final triumph allows us to face the uncertainties of today with the assurance that they cannot undo the promises of God ultimately to reward faithfulness, to welcome us into His presence, and to overcome all evil and pain with good and joy* (1 Thess. 4:13-18; Matt. 25:31-36; Rev. 19-20).

Section 3 Moral and Societal Concerns

The church recognizes its responsibility to speak to its generation concerning the great moral and social questions of the day, applying biblical truth to the question at hand. The church may adopt positions on such questions through a process parallel to the process of constitutional amendment (Article 13). We recognize that, as time passes, these statements may or may not address then-current concerns; thus, they are not placed within the articles of this constitution but listed in an appendix. They will, however, reflect the official position of the church and will be considered binding on the church's leadership and actions.

Article 5: GOVERNMENT

Section 1 Nature

Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the congregation of the church is the final authority within this local church. This authority is normally exercised through the election of officers to govern the church. However, the vote of the membership of this church at a properly called meeting, as provided in the constitution, shall be required to effect the following actions:

- a. Approve new members;
- b. Elect officers of the church;
- c. Discipline members by dismissing them and discipline officers by removing them from office;
- d. Approve annual budgets of the church;
- e. Accept, reject, or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the membership of the church by the Council of Elders, or raised through following the processes provided in this Constitution;
- f. Adopt, amend, or repeal the Constitution of this church;
- g. Approve the call and job description of all staff ministers.

Section 2 Officers

The offices of the church shall be Elder and Deacon. The purpose of the officers of the church is to lovingly govern, care for, and equip the membership to do the work of the ministry.

- a. The leadership of the church shall be vested in the Council of Elders which is responsible for governing the church, teaching the Word and tending the flock of God in this church. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function, with a Senior Pastor serving as the first among equals. The Council of Elders will function as the Board of Directors of the Corporation.
- b. Deacons shall assist the Council of Elders by performing services of advice, administration, implementation, and benevolence.

Article 6: MEETINGS

Section 1 For Worship

Public services shall be held on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at regular intervals on Sundays and at such other times as the Council of Elders may determine. Other public services may be appointed as the advancement of the work of the church may require.

Section 2 For Business

- a. The Annual Meeting. The annual meeting shall be held some time during the last quarter of the fiscal year of the church for the purpose of calling and reaffirming the officers, reviewing proposed budgets, and other business. Officers called at the annual meeting shall assume their duties at the beginning of the new fiscal year.

b. Special Meetings. The Council of Elders or ten percent of the members in good standing submitting a written petition to the Council may call for a special meeting. Unless stipulated otherwise, notice of the meeting shall be given orally during the regular Lord's Day meeting or by other notification, the particular object of such meeting being clearly stated in the notice. Notice shall be given for two Sundays prior to the meeting, and resident members shall be notified by electronic or surface mail at least one week prior to the meeting. The acceptance of new members may take place at any meeting of the church without advance notice of the meeting when all other membership procedures have been followed.

c. Quorum. Unless stipulated otherwise, all meetings for the conducting of business shall require ten percent (10%) of the members to be present to form a quorum. Majorities will be determined based on those voting in the affirmative or negative, not those present.

d. Procedures. The moderator of all meetings shall be designated by the Council of Elders from among their lay members, and all meetings shall require the moderator to present the business to be considered, entertain any questions pertaining to that business, and bring the business to a vote by the congregation by whatever method is chosen or required. Matters not specifically requiring a ballot may be approved by acclamation, voice vote, or show of hands, with the moderator determining the outcome. If three members publicly question that determination in the meeting, a ballot shall be conducted.

Article 7: CHURCH OFFICERS

Section 1-General Statement

a. Officers. The Officers of the church shall be a Council of Elders and the Deacons. Officers shall be called to office by vote of the membership of the church as provided for in Article 6 and Article 7, Section 2 and Section 3 of this Constitution. All officers of the church shall be active members of the church in good standing. The Council of Elders shall be composed of men only; the Deacons may be composed of men and women. Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) below, the Council of Elders and the Deacons are the only bodies and positions created by this Constitution.

b. Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary. The church, upon nomination by the Council of Elders, shall elect by ballot at the annual meeting members to the positions of Church Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary. The offices of Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall not be filled by the same member. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be bonded by the church in a suitable amount. The Elders shall provide a written description of duties to the Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.

c. Committees and Appointees. The Council of Elders has the authority to create committees and positions to which it may delegate any specified aspect of its responsibility. The Council of Elders has the authority to dissolve any committee or position which it created. The Council of Elders also has the authority to appoint Elders, Deacons, or other members of the church to serve as members of such committees and to act as its agents in such positions. The Deacons may nominate candidates for any committee or position with appointment by the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders may delegate to the Deacons the authority to appoint Deacons or other members of the church to serve as members of such committees and as agents of the Council of Elders in such positions. Every committee shall have a chairperson, responsible for the overall operation of the committee, who shall be appointed by the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders may delegate the responsibility for selecting the chairperson to the Deacons or to the committee

Section 2-Vocational Ministers

a. Definition. Vocational ministers are those who, in response to God's call and by the confirmation of the church, devote their full-time energies to the service of God's people and will receive financial support from the church. Those called by the church to fill a pastoral capacity within their approved job description must meet the qualifications of an elder and will serve as members of the Council of Elders. However, not all vocational ministers will be elders, nor will all elders be financially supported by the church. A vocational minister may be called to fill a role other than a pastoral role, and will be expected to meet the qualifications of a deacon.

b. Duties. In addition to the duties of their office as described in Sections 4 and 5 below, Vocational Ministers shall perform the duties determined by the Council of Elders and approved by the congregation. The duties shall be in writing at the time of the call to service, and substantial changes shall be approved by the church. The Senior Pastor of the church is one of the Vocational Ministers of the church, with an equal vote among the Council of Elders, but in recognition of the church's call to this role, will be the leader of the Vocational Ministers.

c. Vocational Call by the Church. The members shall call Vocational Ministers (1) by ballot upon recommendation of the Council of Elders and (2) by at least three-quarters majority of those members voting at a meeting called in accord with the procedures outlined in Article 6. Vocational Ministers shall serve an indeterminate term and stand for reaffirmation not later than the third annual meeting following their call and every three years afterward. Reaffirmation of a Minister shall be by two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at the meeting.

d. Termination of Vocational Call by the Church.

1. By resignation. The question of terminating the vocational call of a Vocational Minister shall be considered at any time by the church upon the presentation of the Minister's resignation.

2. Grievance. Where a grievance exists against a Minister, either due to his preaching or teaching contrary to the Articles of Faith of the church as set forth in Article 4 of this Constitution or to alleged conduct on his part unfitting a Minister, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two members in good standing at any regular or special meeting of the Council. If the Council, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the vocational call of the Minister may be terminated at any business meeting upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders when supported by ballot of a majority of those members of the church present and voting at a meeting called in accord with the procedures outlined in Article 6.

3. Lack of reaffirmation. If a Vocational Minister fails to be reaffirmed as provided in paragraph (c) above, a special business meeting shall be called to consider the question of terminating the vocational call of that Minister. The vocational call shall be terminated only if supported by ballot of a majority of those members of the church at a meeting called in accord with the procedures outlined in Article 6. Removal from office and termination of the vocational call by this means shall not be considered disciplinary action.

e. Licensing, Commissioning, and Ordination.

1. Licensing. The church may license someone from its membership for ministry. The candidate must demonstrate actual and observed ministry experience, and submit a request for licensure to the Council of Elders. Those determined to be appropriate candidates will be licensed by a two-thirds vote of the Council.

2. Commissioning. The church commissions vocational missionaries who are members of the church. A member missionary may submit a request for commissioning to the Council of Elders; upon the Council's recommendation, it shall be confirmed by ballot of a two thirds majority of those members of the church present and voting at a meeting called in accord with the procedures outlined in Article 6.

3. Ordination. Any male member of the congregation who desires to serve as a Staff Pastor within this church or another church of like faith and practice may request consideration for ordination by the Council of Elders. If the Council believes the candidate possesses the gifts and character required for the office, an Ordination Council will be called, composed of at least five elders from the church, four deacons from the church, and invited pastors, lay elders, and other leaders from churches of like faith and practice. The Ordination Council's work will be to examine the candidate through oral questioning, and to evaluate a doctrinal statement prepared by the candidate and distributed prior to the Ordination Council's meeting. Upon the recommendation of the Ordination Council to the church, the candidate will be ordained upon the vote by ballot of a two thirds majority of those members of the church present and voting at a meeting called in accord with the procedures outlined in Article 6.

4. Transfer of Credentials. When a Vocational Minister comes to the church possessing ordination or license from another church or fellowship of like faith and practice, the church will recognize that ordination as continuing under the auspices of the church. If legal or other requirements warrant, a certificate affirming the continuing ordination or license under the authority of the church will be issued upon a two-thirds vote of the Council of Elders.

Section 3-Volunteer Officers

a. Definition Volunteer officers are the non-paid ministers of the church. The number of such officers will not be fixed, but determined by the Council of Elders based upon the needs of the church at the time of election.

b. Duties. Volunteer officers shall have the duties of their offices as described in Sections 4 and 5 below.

c. Calling

1. of an Elder. The Council of Elders will make a procedure available for all members in good standing to nominate candidates to serve as an Elder. These candidates will be considered by the Council of Elders through a process of interview and evaluation, and all who receive a three-quarters affirmation of the Council will be presented to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting or at a special meeting called for this purpose. Approval will be by a three-quarters majority of members voting in a meeting called for this purpose according to the procedures outlined in Article 6. Non-staff elders will serve a term of four years, and then leave their service on the Council for a period of at least one year before being considered for service again. Terms of office shall be staggered so that normally no more than one-third of the non-staff elders will leave the Council in a given year.

2. of a Deacon. The Council of Elders will make a procedure available for all members in good standing to nominate candidates to serve as a Deacon. These candidates will be considered by the Council, and those affirmed by the Council will be presented to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting, or at a special meeting called for this purpose. Approval will be by a three-quarters majority of members voting in a meeting called for this purpose according to the procedures outlined in Article 6. Deacons will serve a term of three years, and then leave their service for a period of at least one year before being considered for service again. Terms of office shall be staggered so that normally no more than one-third of the Deacons shall leave their service in a given year.

d. Removal.

1. Resignation. An officer may resign his or her office at any time if the officer is no longer able to discharge the duties of the office.

2. Grievance. Where a grievance exists against a volunteer officer of the church either due to the adherence to and propagation of beliefs contrary to the beliefs of the church as set forth in Article 4 of this Constitution or to alleged conduct unfitting for a minister, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two members in good standing. If the Council, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the officer may be removed from

office upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders when supported by ballot of a majority of those members of the church present and voting at a meeting called in accord with the procedures outlined in Article 6.

Section 4-Council of Elders

a. Composition, Term, and Calling. The Council of Elders shall be composed of men only, both staff and non-staff elders, with the number of Elders at any time determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men in the church. There shall be at least a simple majority of non-staff over staff elders, and no fewer than three non-staff elders. If the number of non-staff elders is at or below the number of staff elders, a number of the latter shall be removed from voting status on the Council to maintain a majority of non-staff elders as voting members. The Senior Pastor will not be removed from a voting position.

b. Qualifications. Elders and nominees for Elder shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Elders are also required to be in agreement with the church's Articles of Faith, and affirm this agreement in writing.

c. Responsibilities. The fundamental responsibility of the Elders is to devote themselves to prayer and the Word. The Elders are responsible for governing the church, teaching the Word, and tending the flock of God in this church. The responsibilities of the Elders shall include: examining prospective members and acquainting them with the Articles of Faith and Church Covenant, overseeing the process of church discipline, examining prospective candidates for office, scheduling and providing a moderator for business meetings, providing for reporting and recording of official church business, overseeing the work of the Deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conducting worship services, administering the ordinances of the Gospel, equipping the membership of the church for the work of the ministry, teaching the whole counsel of God both formally and informally, correcting error, overseeing the congregation, coordinating and promoting the ministries of the church, and mobilizing the church for world mission.

d. Organization. The Council of Elders shall organize itself however it determines to be best to achieve the mission of the church. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. The Elders must meet at least once per quarter. Meetings of the Elders may be held at any location and may be conducted by means of electronic communication through which the Elders may simultaneously hear each other. Unless the Council provides otherwise, meetings of the Council may be held immediately upon notice. A quorum for meetings of the Elders is defined as at least one-half of the elders, with non-staff elders in a majority. On those matters where the Council has determined that only non-staff elders may vote a quorum is a majority of the total number of non-staff. The Council shall annually select its Chairman and Vice-Chairman from among its non-staff elders.

Section 5-Deacons

a. Composition, Term, and Calling. A Deacon may be a man or woman. The number of Deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men and women in the church. Each Deacon shall be called by the membership of the church to a normal term of three years, after which a deacon must wait one year before being considered for selection for another term of service.

b. Qualifications. Deacons and nominees for Deacon shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include Acts 6:1-7, Romans 16:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8-12.

c. Responsibilities. The Deacons shall advise and be ready to assist the Elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the church, and the care for the members of the congregation. Their responsibilities may include:

1. Administering a fund to assist the poor and needy and otherwise providing aid in times of crisis or distress;
2. The greeting and welcoming ministries of the church;
3. Assisting in administering the ordinances of the Gospel;
4. Assisting at fellowship gatherings of the church;
5. Caring for and maintaining the church properties;
6. Administering the business affairs of the church that pertain to its material assets;
7. Administering the ministry of benevolence toward those in need;
8. Coordinating visitation of members under care at home or in medical facilities.

d. Organization. The Deacons shall organize themselves however they determine to best achieve the mission of the church. The Elders or the Deacons may designate any specific Deacon or group of Deacons to specialize in some particular Deacon function. Meetings of the Deacons, or subcommittees thereof shall be held as needed to best fulfill the responsibilities of the Deacons.

Article 8: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 Qualifications

Those 18 years of age and older who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, being baptized by immersion in water as a profession of faith, and who declare themselves in agreement with the Church Covenant (Article 3) and the Essentials of Faith (Article 4, Section 1), and are willing to abide by the Historic Distinctives and those positions articulated in our Moral and Societal Concerns, may become a candidate for church membership. Qualified candidates will be accepted as a member by baptism after a profession of faith, by Christian experience, or by restoration.

Section 2 Procedure

Each candidate shall be examined in a format recommended by the Council of Elders. Candidates examined and confirmed by a three-fourths vote of the Council of Elders will be recommended for membership at any regular meeting of the church, where they may be received into membership by the members present by acclamation or other means listed in Article 6. Once received, the candidate shall be granted the rights and privileges of membership.

Section 3 Classification

a. Active Members

Members who regularly attend the congregational meetings of the church or communicate such intentions with the Council of Elders are considered active. Only active members have voting privileges. Active members of the church may not maintain simultaneous active membership in another church.

b. Inactive Members

Members who do not attend the congregational meetings of the church for a period of three months shall be considered inactive and informed of said status. Those considered inactive may be removed from membership after an additional three month's absence if they do not contact the Council of Elders or attend services during that period. Such removal will not be considered a disciplinary action. Inactive members may return to full membership when they resume regular attendance. Inactive members of the church may not maintain simultaneous membership in any other church. Inactive members may not vote.

c. Associate Members

Students and temporary residents of the area may apply for associate membership in order to serve within the church during the time of their residency. They must meet the same qualifications as a regular member, but may maintain simultaneous membership in another church. Associate members will not be able to vote on church business.

Section 4 Duties

Duties of members are represented in the Church Covenant, Article 3.

Section 5 Discipline

a. Foundation

God, in His Word, commands mutual accountability and discipline within a local church (Matt. 18:15-20; Heb. 3:12-13). The purpose of all discipline shall be to strengthen the church and its individual members by promoting consistent Christian living. Church discipline is concerned with anyone who is obstructing the work of the ministry, disturbing the peace of the congregation, or damaging the testimony of the church by anything in doctrine or practice that is contrary to God's Word. Church discipline shall be carried out in accordance with the principles of Matthew 18 and for the purpose of repentance and restoration.

b. Procedures

Church disciplinary action will be conducted according to scriptural principles as explained in the *Guidelines for Church Discipline* (Appendix B) adopted by the membership. Upon joining the membership of Grace Baptist Church, individual members agree to be governed by the church discipline procedures described in this Article, including any supplemental procedures contained in the *Guidelines for Church Discipline*. Members further agree not to appeal to any court because of public statements to the membership during the disciplinary process, or to good faith statements made to leadership of other churches about a former member's termination from membership.

c. Restoration

Any disciplined member on giving satisfactory evidence of repentance by public confession to the congregation may be restored to membership. Following examination and recommendation by the Senior Pastor and a three-fourths vote of the Council of Elders, a disciplined member can be restored by a three-fourths vote of the membership at a meeting called in accord with the procedures of Article 6.

Section 6 Removal

Upon recommendation of the church clerk and a three-fourths vote of the Council of Elders, a person may be removed from membership. The name of any member removed will be posted for the congregation. Membership can be terminated:

a. By death.

b. By written request. Any member may request dismissal. Those becoming an active member of another church may allow that church to request removal on the member's behalf.

c. By discipline. Members who are under discipline by the church forfeit and waive the right to resign from the church.

d. By erasure. Any member who is considered inactive for six months may be dismissed from the membership of the church.

Article 9: FINANCES AND FACILITIES

Section 1 Fiscal Year

The Council of Elders shall establish the fiscal year through policy (at the time of this adoption it being January 1 through the following December 31).

Section 2 Use of Facilities

The church building and other facilities shall only be used for purposes in accord with all policies adopted by the Council of Elders, such policies reflecting the purposes of the church stated in Article 2, in accord with practices consistent with the Articles of Faith (Article 4) and Appendix A of this constitution.

Section 3 Financial Obligations

After the church budget has been approved for a fiscal year, there shall not be any additional financial obligation placed upon the church, either as a mortgage, note, or outstanding bill, in excess of three percent of the annual budget of that fiscal year except by the majority vote of the members at a meeting called in accord with the procedures in Article 6.

Section 4 Special Offerings and Designated Gifts

All special offerings shall be disbursed for the purposes specified. The Council of Elders, by a two-thirds vote, may open the treasury for designated gifts. Should anyone designate a gift that is deemed inappropriate by the treasurer and the Council of Elders, it shall be returned to the donor.

Article 10: AFFILIATIONS

Section 1 Global and Local Outreach

The church shall be actively engaged in the global task of missions through the recruitment and commissioning of members as missionaries, and through supporting missionaries from other congregations of like faith and practice. The church may also enter into partnerships with ministries globally and locally that are furthering the advance of the gospel. The Council of Elders or designees will insure the essential agreement of all missionaries and supported agencies with the church's Essentials of Faith.

Section 2 Associations

The church may affiliate with local, regional, and national associations of churches of like faith and practice for mutual encouragement, shared ministry, and unified witness to the world. Such affiliation shall be effected by the majority vote of the membership at a meeting called in accord with the procedures outlined in Article 6, and may be terminated by the same method.

Section 3 Messengers

Messengers may be appointed by the Council of Elders to represent the church in the associations in which the church holds fellowship, whose duty it shall be to represent faithfully the desires of the church and to cooperate with the messengers of other churches in promoting the interest of the Gospel of Christ.

Article 11: INDEMNIFICATION

All those serving in the local church, whether pastoral staff, other staff, or ministry volunteers, shall be indemnified consistent with the church's liability insurance 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. The church shall maintain comprehensive liability coverage. This protection shall not extend to matters in which these workers are deemed to be liable for gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of their duties.

Article 12: DISSOLUTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS

Section 1 Dissolution

Any move to dissolve the Corporation will be confirmed by a three-fourths vote of the Council of Elders and a three-fourths vote of the active members at a meeting called in accord with the procedures outlined in Article 6. Upon the dissolution of the Corporation, all of its debts shall be fully satisfied through the application of property and assets.

Section 2 Distribution of Assets

Upon the dissolution of the Corporation, assets shall be distributed to one or more charitable, religious, or educational purposes within the meaning of section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code. In the event of a dispute or in the event of any asset not being disposed of, those assets shall be disposed of by the Court of Common Pleas or the court of general jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is located exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations as the said court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, or religious purposes and shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization within the meaning of section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Article 13: AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended, at the recommendation of two-thirds vote of the Council of Elders and a two-thirds vote of the members at a meeting called in accord with the procedures in Article 6. The proposed amendment(s) subject to vote must not vary from the text of the proposed amendment(s) provided by letter to members.

Article 14: CONSTITUTION ADOPTION

When adopted by the Church, this Constitution shall cancel and supersede any previous Constitution and bylaws, with all amendments thereto, now in existence.

APPENDIX A Moral and Societal Concerns

1. Sexual Relationships and Marriage

God created mankind male and female, and when he did so also established the normative pattern of a one man and a one woman together in the relationship called marriage. Sexual union is one of God's specific blessings to be enjoyed only within marriage: for manifesting the oneness of the husband and wife, (male and female), for the mutual joy of both partners, and for the procreation of children. A married couple forms the foundation of the biblical family to which the blessing of children may be added, but which is in no way less a family if God does not grant that gift. Attempts to include any other sexual relationship whether heterosexual or homosexual within the scope of biblically acceptable behavior is a violation of Scripture. We hold that all sexual activity outside the union of husband and wife within marriage violates God's Word and is outside of God's purposes for sex. Based on the clear teaching of Scripture, we must specifically reject homosexuality in any form as acceptable behavior. Yet we also recognize that the Bible offers both forgiveness for sexual sin, and the hope of both relational restoration and sexual wholeness through God's sanctifying power (Gen. 1, 2; Eph. 5:22-23; Rom. 1:18-32).

Because of these beliefs, marriage ceremonies performed by duly appointed ministers of the church or using the church facilities must conform to the biblical pattern of one man and one woman entering into a lifelong covenant. Such services are a form of Christian worship and are to be viewed as such by all participants. Those seeking to marry under the ministry of the church's ministers or in its facilities must be approved by the Senior Pastor (or in his absence, the Council of Elders) and be determined to be eligible to marry under these guidelines and any wedding and marriage policies of the church then in effect. Officiants of such ceremonies who are not ministers appointed by the church must be approved by the Senior Pastor (or in his absence, the Council of Elders).

2. Sanctity of Life

God is the creator of all life, and from the moment of conception He recognizes each unique individual in His sight. Thus the purposeful taking of the life of that unborn individual is a sin both against the God Who grants life and Who has created mankind in His image and against that unborn person. Once born, a person's life is still a sacred gift, and any attempt by oneself or others to end prematurely that life for any reasons other than capital punishment is also a violation of both the Giver and possessor of that life (Jer. 1:5; Ps. 51:5; Luke 1:39-44; Ps. 139; Gen. 1:26; Gen. 9:6).

3. Gender Identity and Confusion

God created mankind male and female, and this binary and complementary pattern (as with heavens and earth, light and darkness, sun and moon, day and night, land and seas) is defining of a person's essential nature. A person is born male or female, and this fundamental identity cannot be altered or abandoned. When sin entered the world, every kind of brokenness that we experience found its root, and gender confusion represents one form of this brokenness. While its secondary causes are hotly debated, its primary cause is the alienation from God and the God of truth, leading to an alienation from oneself and the truth about oneself before the Creator. Gender confusion that leads to rejection of one's created condition is a sin against God and oneself. However, the grace of salvation is offered to all sinners, and the power of sanctifying grace in the life of all who believe; therefore, we believe that those whose lives have been marked by gender confusion can experience, in salvation, the power of sanctification to live a new life in conformity to God's created design. We believe the church is called to be a redemptive and healing community for all repentant sinners, including the gender-confused.

APPENDIX B Guidelines for Church Discipline

1. Mutual accountability and discipline within the church is commanded by God in Scripture and is one of the most important responsibilities of a true church of Jesus Christ (see Matt. 18:12-20; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Gal. 2:11-14; Eph. 5:11; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10; Heb. 10:24-30; 12:5-17; 2 John 7-11; Rev. 3:19).
2. Church (ecclesiastical) discipline is the exercise of that authority that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed to the visible church for the preservation of its purity, peace, and good order. Members of this church who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture in an unrepentant manner as determined by the Council of Elders, shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18. The ultimate goal of all discipline is to train Christians to be self-disciplined so that they may share in the holiness of God (see Heb. 12:7-13).
3. Church discipline is concerned with the prevention and correction of offenses, an offense being defined as anything in the doctrine or practice of a member of this church that is contrary to the Word of God, a direct violation of the church covenant, or failure to adhere to the church Articles of Faith in the prescribed manner, all in a manner that lacks repentance. The purpose of church discipline is: (1) to guard and preserve the honor of God (see Acts 5:1-11; Rom. 2:23-24; 2 Cor. 7:1); (2) to protect the purity of the church and to guard other Christians from being tempted, misled, divided, or otherwise harmed (see 1 Cor. 5:6); (3) to warn the unrepentant sinner of their need to turn away from their sin (1 Cor. 5:5); and (4) to restore fallen Christians to usefulness to God and fellowship with His church (see Matt. 18:15; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; 7:8-10; Gal. 6:1-2).
4. Discipline involves five components or phases:
 - (1) God commands all Christians to make every effort, with His help, to discipline themselves and lead godly lives (see Eph. 4:25-5:6; 2 Tim. 1:7; 2 Pet. 1:5-11);
 - (2) if a Christian fails to discipline himself and is trapped in a sin, God commands other brothers and sisters in Christ to lovingly confront, counsel, and encourage him toward repentance individually, then in groups of two or three (Matt. 18:15-16; Gal. 6:1-2; Col. 3:16; Heb. 10:24-25);
 - (3) if the approach of individuals and small groups of fellow believers proves ineffective in securing repentance, the Council of Elders will use various means at disposal to seek to restore the accused member; these efforts will be documented (Gal. 6:1; 1 Pet. 5:1ff);
 - (4) if the Council of Elders are unable to secure a biblical resolution of the situation on behalf of the church, the matter is to be shared with the congregation of believers, so that all might pray and personally encourage the erring believer to repent;
 - (5) if all of these preceding efforts do not correct an offense, God commands the church to remove the unrepentant believer from the fellowship of the church (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:13), so that the offender may experience the breach in relationship that sin brings between himself and the Body of Christ (see Matt. 18:17, 1 Cor. 5:5-11). Upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders and by a majority vote of the active voting membership, at a meeting called in accord with the procedures outlined in Article 6, fellowship may be withdrawn from the accused believer. The members of this church agree that there shall be no appeal to any court because of the dismissal or because of public statements to the congregation at the fourth or fifth stages of church discipline. At any time in the process a believer who has been confronted will have the right of appeal to the Council of Elders to be heard in regard to the matter in which he or she stands accused.

5. Just as a good shepherd will go after a sheep that has wandered from the flock (Matt. 18:12-14; Ezek. 34:4, 8, 16), so shall the Council of Elders, and members of this church seek to restore a wandering believer to the Lord through biblical discipline. Therefore, discipline may be instituted or continued either before or after a member seeks to withdraw from membership if the Council of Elders determines that such discipline may serve to guard and preserve the honor of God, protect the purity of the church, or restore the erring member to the Lord (see #4). Members who are under discipline by the church forfeit and waive the right to resign from this church. Resignations from membership are possible only by members who are in good standing and who are not under any disciplinary action. While the church cannot force a withdrawing person to remain in this congregation, the church has the right and the responsibility to encourage restoration, to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, and to make a final determination as to the person's membership and/or fellowship status at the time withdrawal is sought or acknowledged. In doing so, the Council of Elders, at its discretion, may temporarily suspend further disciplinary proceedings, dismiss any or all charges pending against the accused, or proceed with discipline.
6. If a person who has been removed from fellowship comes to repentance, the church shall warmly and lovingly restore that person to fellowship within the body (see Matt. 18:13; Luke 15:11-32). Once the Council of Elders are persuaded that the person has sincerely confessed his wrongs and sought forgiveness from God and the person or persons he offended, it shall recommend his restoration. This action shall be affirmed by a majority vote of the members of the congregation at any meeting of the congregation, a quorum being present. It shall also be accompanied by a solemn admonition to the congregation that the restored person's offenses have been forgiven and are not to be held against him or otherwise hinder his fellowship within the church (see 2 Cor. 2:5-11). When deemed appropriate by the Elders, however, the restored person may be restricted from certain responsibilities (see 1 Tim. 3:2, 8; Titus 1:6).