

GRACE FAMILY CHURCH

Constitution & By-Laws



Established 2006

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GRACE FAMILY CHURCH

Constitution & By-Laws



ARTICLE I. NAME, LOCATION, AND AFFILIATION

The name of this church shall be Grace Family Church and though independent and autonomous, is a Southern Baptist Church. The church is voluntarily cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention in its ministries and the spreading of the gospel of Christ around the world through its mission programs. We are organized as a non-profit organization.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is as stated in the New Testament scriptures. This church exists for God's pleasure and to bring glory and honor to His name and the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.¹ This is done through the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of its members to attain unity of faith and true knowledge of Christ to spiritual maturity.² Thus, we can be light in a darkened world in word and in deed.³ The church shall be devoted to equipping of the saints, worship of our God, watchcare of its members, and witnessing to the lost world of the grace and mercy of our God toward them.⁴

ARTICLE III. STATEMENT OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

SECTION I. STATEMENT OF FAITH

Because we believe that the Holy Bible is the Inspired, Infallible, and Inerrant Word of God, it alone is and will be the basis and authority of answering any and all questions regarding the purpose, structure, and function of the church. We find the teachings of the Bible to be faithfully represented and succinctly summarized in the 1689 London Baptist Confession.

¹ Colossians 1:15-19

² Ephesians 4:11-16

³ Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 5:7-8

⁴ Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 4:11-16

The following five essential and non-negotiable statements of faith are the foundation and framework on which this constitution and these by-laws are based.

I. We Believe In A High View of God.

God is absolutely sovereign in all things. The church is established and exists for His glory alone. God is directing and working all things after the counsel of His own will.⁵

II. We Believe In A High View of Scripture.

Because the Bible is the Inspired, Infallible, and Inerrant Word of God in the original language passed down to us without change, it is the absolute and final authority on all matters.⁶

III. We Believe In the Preaching of Sound Doctrine.

Maintaining a high view of God and a high view of scripture necessitates the preaching, teaching, and practicing of sound doctrine.⁷

IV. We Believe In Personal Holiness.

Though we are in the world, we are not of the world. We are accountable to God and to each other for what we do and how we live, for we have been bought and are not our own.⁸ We belong to Christ.

V. We Believe In Spiritual Authority.

God himself has established order in every area of our lives, and the church is no exception. God in scripture has clearly given us the structure of authority for the church.

Christ is the head of the church and He mediates His rule through the shepherding of godly elders (pastors).⁹

These elders (pastors), having a high view of God and scripture, being devoted to the preaching, teaching and practicing of sound doctrine, and being examples of personal holiness before the congregation, are responsible to lead the church.

The Bible teaches that the congregation is accountable to the elders (pastors) and that the elders (pastors) are accountable to God.

⁵ Psalm 22:28; 33:6-9; 115:3; Daniel 4:34-35; Isaiah 40:17-18; Romans 9:13-29; Revelation 4:11

⁶ 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21

⁷ 2 Timothy 4:1-5

⁸ Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 1:18; Ephesians 5:3-12

⁹ Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 5:1-4

Therefore, all decision-making authority is vested in the elders (pastors), who shepherd the church.¹⁰ (See Article VI)

SECTION 2. DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS

We adopt as the fullest expression of our faith the 1689 London Baptist Confession, also known as the Second London Baptist Confession. However, the ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice is and must be the Bible alone, this truth being clearly set forth in the open article of the Confession. This historic document, although imperfect, is an excellent summary of the things most surely believed among us, and we find it to be an assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness.

A. GOD

We teach that there is but one living and true God, an infinite, all-knowing Spirit,¹¹ perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,¹² each equally deserving worship and obedience.

B. GOD THE FATHER

We teach that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace.¹³ He is the Creator of all things.¹⁴ As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption.¹⁵ His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men,¹⁶ but He is Spiritual Father only to believers.¹⁷ He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass.¹⁸ He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events.¹⁹ In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin,²⁰ nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures.²¹ He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own;²² He saves from sin all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own.²³

¹⁰ Acts 15:6-21; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17

¹¹ Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; John 4:24; 1 Corinthians 8:4

¹² Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14

¹³ Psalms 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6

¹⁴ Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9

¹⁵ Psalms 103:19; Romans 11:36

¹⁶ Ephesians 4:6

¹⁷ Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18

¹⁸ Ephesians 1:11

¹⁹ 1 Chronicles 29:11

²⁰ Hebrews 1:13

²¹ 1 Peter 1:17

²² Ephesians 1:4-6

²³ John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9

C. GOD THE SON

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father.²⁴

We teach that God the Father created "the heavens and the earth and all that is in them" according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation.²⁵

We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-man.²⁶

We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness.²⁷

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born;²⁸ that He was God incarnate;²⁹ and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom.³⁰

We teach that, in the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes.³¹

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive.³²

We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God.³³

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High-Priest.³⁴

²⁴ John 10:30; John 14:9

²⁵ John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2

²⁶ Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9

²⁷ Micah 5:2; John 5:23; John 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9

²⁸ Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23-25; Luke 1:26-35

²⁹ John 1:1,14

³⁰ Psalms 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11

³¹ Philippians 2:5-8

³² John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24

³³ Romans 3:25; Romans 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18

³⁴ Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24; 1 John 2:1

We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers.³⁵

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His body, unto Himself.

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all mankind: ³⁶

- a. Believers;³⁷
- b. Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return,³⁸ and
- c. Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne.³⁹

As the mediator between God and man, the head of His body the church,⁴⁰ and the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David,⁴¹ He is the final judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior.⁴²

D. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We teach that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is divine, eternal, non-derived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect, emotions, will, eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and truthfulness.⁴³ In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son.⁴⁴

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in the creation, the incarnation, the written revelation, and the work of salvation.⁴⁵

We teach that a unique work of the Holy Spirit began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ⁴⁶ to initiate and complete the building of the body of Christ. His activity in-

³⁵ John 5:26-29; John 14:19; Romans 4:25; Romans 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

³⁶ John 5:22-23

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10

³⁸ Matthew 25:31-46

³⁹ Revelation 20:11-15

⁴⁰ Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:5

⁴¹ Isaiah 9:6-7; Ezekiel 37:24-28; Luke 1:31-33

⁴² Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31

⁴³ Psalms 139:7-10; Isaiah 40:13-14; John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Romans 15:13; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 9:14

⁴⁴ Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 10:15-17

⁴⁵ Genesis 1:2; Matthew 1:18; John 3:5-7; 2 Peter 1:20-21

⁴⁶ John 14:16-17; John 15:26

cludes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, and transforming believers into the image of Christ.⁴⁷

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption.⁴⁸

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with the Spirit.⁴⁹

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. He glorifies Christ by redeeming the lost and building up believers in the faith.⁵⁰

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints.⁵¹

E. THE SCRIPTURES

We teach that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction;⁵² that it has God for its author, salvation for its end,⁵³ and truth without any mixture of error for its matter;⁵⁴ that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us;⁵⁵ and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian unity,⁵⁶ and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.⁵⁷

F. SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Jesus Christ wants to manifest His own character through the church.⁵⁸ To accomplish that through individual believers, the Holy Spirit gives every believer, at the time of conversion, a unique spiritual giftedness with which to minister to the rest of the body.⁵⁹ The Holy Spirit gives gifts by divine will

⁴⁷ John 16:7-9; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:20-22

⁴⁸ Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13

⁴⁹ 2 Peter 1:19-21; Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 5:18; Romans 8:9-11; 1 John 2:20,27

⁵⁰ John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18

⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Corinthians 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4

⁵² 2 Samuel 23:2; Psalm 119:111; Luke 16:29-31; Acts 1:16; Acts 3:21; John 10:35; Romans 3:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21

⁵³ Mark 16:15-16; John 5:38-39; Acts 11:14; Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 1:10-12

⁵⁴ Proverbs 30:5-6; John 17:17; Romans 3:3-4; Revelation 22:18

⁵⁵ Luke 10:10-16; Luke 12:47-48; John 12:47-48; Romans 2:12

⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3-6; Philippians 2:1-2; Philippians 3:16; 1 Peter 4:11

⁵⁷ Psalm 119:59-60; Isaiah 8:20; Acts 17:11; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 6:17; Philippians 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:6; Jude 3

⁵⁸ Ephesians 4:13

⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:11; 1 Peter 4:10-11

and choice. In God's Word we find these gifts: prophecy (proclamation), teaching, faith, wisdom, knowledge, mercy, exhortation, giving, administration, discernment of spirits, helps, miracles, healing, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.⁶⁰

G. CREATION

We teach that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, as described in the first and second chapters of Genesis. In the Bible, there is no basis for an evolutionary process being the cause of the origin or the significant alteration of life or life forms.⁶¹

H. PROVIDENCE

We teach that God, from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures.⁶²

I. ELECTION

We teach that election is God's eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life – not because of foreseen merit in them, but of His mere grace and mercy in Christ, and are called, justified and glorified by Christ.⁶³

J. THE FALL OF MAN

We teach that God originally created man in His own image and free from sin, but through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God and fell from his original holiness and righteousness. His being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of his sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all his posterity descending from him by ordinary generation,⁶⁴ being now conceived in sin,⁶⁵ and by nature children of wrath,⁶⁶ the servants of sin, the subjects of death,⁶⁷ and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ Acts 14:1-31; 1 Corinthians 14:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:1-4

⁶¹ Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11; Exodus 31:17; Psalms 33:9

⁶² Josh 7:14; Job 37:9-13; Psalms 36:6; Psalms 37:28; Psalms 91:4; Psalms 140:7; Psalms 145:9; Matthew 6:26, 33-34; Matthew 10:29; Acts 1:26

⁶³ John 6:37-40,44, 65; John 10:14, 26-27; John 15:16; Romans 8:28-30; Romans 9:11; Ephesians 1:4-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1, 2; Titus 1:1

⁶⁴ Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22,45,49

⁶⁵ Psalms 51:5; Job 14:4

⁶⁶ Ephesians 2:3

⁶⁷ Romans 6:20; 5:12

⁶⁸ Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 1:10

K. THE MEDIATOR

We teach that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man.⁶⁹ Having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin,⁷⁰ He perfectly fulfilled the Law, suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners.⁷¹ He was buried, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to His Father, at whose hand He ever liveth to make intercession for His people.⁷² He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the Universe.

L. REGENERATION

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts the dead in trespasses and sins enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness.⁷³ Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit.⁷⁴ This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone.⁷⁵

M. REPENTANCE

We teach that a person, by the Holy Spirit,⁷⁶ is made aware of the evil of his sin, humbles himself for it, with sorrow and detestation of it, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things.⁷⁷

N. FAITH

We teach that saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatsoever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and leads to a life of holiness.⁷⁸

O. JUSTIFICATION

We teach that justification before God is an act of God by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins, and confess Him as sovereign Lord.⁷⁹ This righteousness

⁶⁹ John 3:16; John 1:1-14; Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 12:24

⁷⁰ Philippians 2:6-7; Hebrews 2:9,14

⁷¹ Philippians 2:8; Galatians 4:4-5; Romans 3:21

⁷² Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 20:28; Romans 4:25; Romans 3:21-26; Hebrews 1:8; Hebrews 8:1; Colossians 3:1-4

⁷³ John 3:3-8; John 5:24; Titus 3:5

⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12; Colossians 3:12-17; 2 Peter 1:4-11

⁷⁵ Romans 8:16,17; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3

⁷⁶ Mark 1:15; 18; John 16:8; Acts 11

⁷⁷ Psalms 51; Luke 15:18-21; Luke 18:13; Acts 2:38-40; 2 Corinthians 7:11; James 4:7-10

⁷⁸ Isaiah 53:11; Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31; Romans 3:24-26; Romans 5:1-2, 19; Romans 10:9; 1 John 2:12

⁷⁹ Isaiah 55:6-7; Acts 3:19; Romans 5:1-22; Romans 8:30,33; Romans 10:9; 2 Corinthians 7:10

is apart from any virtue or work of man and involves the placing of our sins on Christ and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us.⁸⁰

P. SANCTIFICATION

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint.⁸¹

We teach that there is by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the likeness of Christ through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.⁸²

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict – the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh – but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin.⁸³

Q. SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

We teach that those whom God has accepted in the Beloved, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the Church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.⁸⁴

R. THE FAMILY

We teach that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church, and to provide for the man

⁸⁰ Romans 3:20, 26; Romans 4:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24

⁸¹ Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; Hebrews 3:1, 12; Hebrews 10:10, 14; 1 Peter 1:2

⁸² John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:23

⁸³ Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9

⁸⁴ John 5:24; John 6:37-40; John 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; Romans 6:15-22; Romans 8:1, 31-39; Romans 13:13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; Galatians 5:13, 16-17, 25-26; Ephesians 4:30; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 13:5; 1 Peter 1:4-5; Jude 24

and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them through consistent lifestyle, example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.⁸⁵

S. THE CHURCH

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the Church, the Bride of Christ, of which Christ is the head. The Lord Jesus is the head of the Church, which is composed of all his true disciples, and in Him is, invested supremely all power for its government. According to his commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into particular assemblies or churches. To each of these churches, He has given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which He has appointed.⁸⁶

There are two biblically designated offices serving under Christ in the church. Elders (males, who are also called bishops, overseers, and pastor-teachers) and deacons (males), both of whom must meet biblical qualifications.⁸⁷

We teach that members are to support the local assembly with their attendance, prayers, service, and faithful giving. We teach that it is our responsibility as Christians to return a portion of what God has given to us back to Him. We teach that we should give as we have been blessed.⁸⁸

T. BAPTISM

We teach that Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of

⁸⁵ Genesis 2:21-25; Genesis 3:16; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-32; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Colossians 3:19

⁸⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 5:23-32; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 19:7-8

⁸⁷ Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5

⁸⁸ Genesis 14:18; 1 Samuel 12:23; Malachi 3:8-10; Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7; Hebrews 10:24-25

his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of the remission of sins, and of his giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. It is a prerequisite to church membership.⁸⁹

U. THE LORD'S SUPPER

We teach that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and wine, and to be observed by his churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate his death, to confirm the faith, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with him, and of their church fellowship.⁹⁰

V. THE LORD'S DAY

We teach that the Lord's Day has been and is set aside by the church for the worship of the Lord our God.⁹¹

W. CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We teach that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society, and that government officials are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed, unless opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹²

X. DEATH AND ETERNITY

We teach that physical death involves a separation of soul and body⁹³ and that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ.⁹⁴

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment.⁹⁵

Υ. SATAN

We teach that Satan is a created angel. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator, by taking numerous angels with him in his fall, and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ Matthew 3:5-6; Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; John 3:22-23; John 4:1-2; Acts 2:36-42; Acts 10:47-48; Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:27-28; 1 Peter 3:20-21

⁹⁰ Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

⁹¹ Acts 20:5-12; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Revelation 1:10; Hebrews 10:23-25

⁹² Daniel 3:15-18; Daniel 6:7-10; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 22:21; Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-3; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13

⁹³ James 2:26

⁹⁴ Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23

⁹⁵ Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Revelation 20:13-15

⁹⁶ Genesis 3:1-15; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man, the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire.⁹⁷

Z. *LAST THINGS*

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.⁹⁸

ARTICLE IV. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1. THE CHURCH DEFINED

The word church (ekklesia) means “called out ones” and can refer to either the entire spiritual body of Christ or a local congregation of that body. In the New Testament it most often refers to an established local congregation of believers.

Scripture teaches that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body called the Church, the family of God, of which Jesus Christ is the head.⁹⁹ The Church is made up of individual local congregations of believers that assemble together for the cause of fellowship and growing in Christ. God has given each local congregation all that it needs to individually and corporately mature and carry out the commands and commissions of our Lord.¹⁰⁰ The church exists for the spiritual purpose set forth in Article II of this constitution and by-laws.

SECTION 2. MEMBERSHIP DEFINED

Members of this church shall be comprised of those who have:

1. Made a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.¹⁰¹
2. Been scripturally baptized as determined by the elders.¹⁰²
3. Requested to be a member of this church.

⁹⁷ Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 4:1-11; Matthew 25:41; Romans 16:20; Revelation 12:9-10; Revelation 20:10

⁹⁸ 2005 Baptist Faith and Message

⁹⁹ Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22

¹⁰⁰ Acts 2:47; Acts 11:22; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Colossians 4:15

¹⁰¹ Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9

¹⁰² Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:12; Acts 19:5

4. Made a commitment to abide by the membership covenant of this church.
5. Been received as members of the church by the elder body.

SECTION 3. PURPOSE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Church membership is important in that it facilitates:

1. The defining of who belongs to our local congregation.¹⁰³
2. The knowing of who should participate in the privileges and responsibilities of the church.¹⁰⁴
3. The providing of adequate care, nurture, and protection for every individual that belongs to this church.¹⁰⁵
4. The exercising of authority and oversight in discipline and restoration of those members not maintaining a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct.¹⁰⁶

SECTION 4. PROCEDURES FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A. APPLICATION FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Any person may request membership with this church by publicly presenting himself or herself to an elder for membership.

B. PROCESS FOR CONSIDERATION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Upon a person's request for membership, the following procedures will be followed:

1. An elder of the church shall present the constitution and by-laws and the membership covenant to the applicant.
2. The person shall meet with the elders to discuss if he or she has truly trusted Christ as Savior and discuss and answer any questions regarding the church and his or her membership commitment.
3. After meeting with the elders of the church, if the person is found to be of kindred spirit with the church and will commit to the responsibilities of membership, then the elders shall prayerfully consider his or her request for membership.
4. If a request for membership is denied, the elders of the church will meet with the person to discuss and answer any questions regarding the decision of the elder body.

¹⁰³ Philemon 2:2

¹⁰⁴ 1 Timothy 5:16; James 5:14

¹⁰⁵ Acts 6:1

¹⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

5. Upon elder body approval, the new member shall be publicly presented to the church as a fellow member of the church.

SECTION 5. MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Upon successful completion of the membership consideration process, the new member shall sign the membership covenant found in the Appendix of this document.

SECTION 6. DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS

The purpose of church discipline is to effect a return to a biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs, to maintain purity in the local church, and to deter sin.

Members of this church who shall err in doctrine or conduct shall be subject to dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18, Galatians 6:1, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 1:18-20, 1 Timothy 5:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:16-18, and James 5:19-20.

Before such dismissal, however:

1. It shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring member's heresy or misconduct to warn and to correct such erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
2. If said erring member does not heed this warning, then the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two witnesses to warn and correct such erring member, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
3. If said erring member still refuses to heed this additional warning, then, it shall be brought to the attention of the elders for further attempts to warn, correct, and exhort the erring member.
4. If said erring member does not heed this warning, the elders, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall tell it to the church, and he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the church.
5. There shall be no appeal to any court for that decision.
6. It is understood that this process will continue to conclusion even if the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership to avoid the discipline process.
7. If said member, after dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests restoration of membership, he or she shall be publicly restored to membership.

SECTION 7. REMOVAL FROM MEMBERSHIP

Members may be removed from church membership for any of the following reasons:

1. Death.
2. Transfer of membership, providing that disciplinary action is not in process for an offense under Article IV, Section 6 of the constitution and by-laws.
3. Disciplinary action.

SECTION 8. MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

A. TYPES OF MEETINGS

1. A regular annual meeting shall be held to affirm the church's annual budget and hear reports to the congregation from the elder body regarding the church.
2. Special meetings may be called by the elder body to report to the church of pending decisions or decisions made by the elder body.

SECTION 9. ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

Scripture teaches that there are two ordinances that the church is to observe.

1. Baptism.
2. The Lord's Supper.

ARTICLE V. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

SECTION I. PURPOSE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Church government is an extremely practical and theologically significant issue. Biblical structure and function allows the peaceful and orderly working out of the ministry of the church. The Church is the family of God, and its head is Jesus Christ. Just as God has given us the structure and the function of each person in a family, He has done so in regards to his church.¹⁰⁷ God's Word reveals the proper structure of the church and the function of each of its parts.

The purpose of such structure and instruction is to ensure spiritual maturity both individually and corporately as a New Testament Church.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Ephesians 5:23

¹⁰⁸ Ephesians 4:11-13

SECTION 2. STRUCTURE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

A. *JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD*

Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. Jesus Christ has revealed His will for us, as the Church, through His Word, the Bible.¹⁰⁹

B. *ELDERS*

Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church mediates His rule over the Church by calling and appointing elders (pastors) to shepherd, oversee, and lead the church. These elders are directly responsible to Jesus Christ for the governing of the church according to His Word.¹¹⁰

(See ARTICLE VI for detailed information about elders.)

C. *DEACONS*

Deacons are recommended by the church and approved by the elders to assist the elders in the practical ministry of service to the church.¹¹¹

(See ARTICLE VII for detailed information about deacons.)

SECTION 3. COUNCILS

To promote efficient handling of church matters, the elder body may appoint various councils from within its members, the deacons, and from the church at large. These councils shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and with the powers specifically delegated by the elder body.

The general functions of any council are:

1. To bring considered recommendations to the elder body concerning church matters.
2. To provide a wider base of counsel to the elder body regarding church matters.

All elders serve as ex-officio members of all councils and may sit as such at their discretion.

All councils shall exist for the period specified by the elder body.

¹⁰⁹ Ephesians 5:23

¹¹⁰ Acts 20:28-30; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; 1 Peter 5:1-2

¹¹¹ Acts 6:1-6

SECTION 4. ORDINATION AND LICENSING

A. ORDINATION

Ordination refers to the recognition by the elders and the church of a man's call to the ministry as a pastor or a deacon.¹¹² Ordination shall be conferred for life, so long as the man manifests the qualifications of the office to which he was ordained.

B. LICENSING

A man shall be licensed by the church to the gospel ministry upon the approval of the elder body.¹¹³

SECTION 5. CHURCH RECORDS

The church shall maintain current, adequate, and correct accounts and records of its business and properties. All such records and accounts shall be in the watch care of the church treasurer or an elder appointed member. The treasurer or member appointed by the elders shall maintain an accurate account of all receipts and disbursements. The fiscal year of the church shall begin on January 1st, and end on December 31st of each year.

SECTION 6. DISSOLUTION OF THE CHURCH

The elder body shall allow the church membership to decide by ballot vote the dissolution of the church. A 75% majority vote of all eligible members present is required for the dissolution of the church. Upon the dissolution of the church, the elder body shall cause all assets of the church to be distributed to another church of like faith and kindred spirit. The elder body shall allow the church membership to approve their decision on the distribution of the assets of the church. Approval shall be by a 75% majority vote of all eligible members present at a special-called meeting for that purpose.

SECTION 7. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

The constitution and by-laws may be amended or changed by the elder body. Changes to Article III, Statement of Faith and Doctrine, will require a unanimous vote of the elder body. The elder body shall seek a ballot affirmation of the congregation when changes or amendments to the constitution and by-laws are required. (See Article VI, Section 2.B.1 for information about ballot affirmations.)

¹¹² Acts 6:6; Acts 13:2-4; Acts 20:28

¹¹³ This allows a man to legally perform weddings.

ARTICLE VI. ELDERS

The New Testament Scripture is clear about those who have the responsibility of rule, oversight, and care of the church. These men are called elders, overseers, and bishops. All three different titles are used to refer to the same spiritual office of leadership in the church and are interchangeable.¹¹⁴ Christ is the head of the church and that He mediates His rule in the church through the shepherding of elders (pastors).¹¹⁵

SECTION I. THE AUTHORITY OF THE ELDERS

A. *DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY*

All the decision-making authority of the church is vested in the elders (pastors) who shepherd the church. The objective of any and all decisions made shall be to do the will of God regarding the matter at hand.¹¹⁶

B. *DECISION-MAKING PROCESS*

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration in a spirit of humility, with each elder regarding one another before himself.

A simple majority is required to make a decision.

Statement of unity: Any decision made after following the agreed upon decision-making process will be a unified “yes” or “no” decision. All elders agree to be unified in the final decision, “yes” or “no,” in public and in private, even though it may not agree with their personal preference.¹¹⁷

C. *SPECIAL DECISIONS*

The elder body shall seek a ballot affirmation of the congregation when the following decisions are being made:¹¹⁸

1. The church’s annual budget.
2. Expenditures involving new property or new buildings.
3. The selection of elders.
4. Any changes or amendments to the constitution and by-laws.

¹¹⁴ 1 Timothy 3:1-7

¹¹⁵ Acts 20:17-18, 28-31; 1 Peter 5:1-4

¹¹⁶ Acts 15:2-6; Hebrews 13:7

¹¹⁷ Acts 15:6-22

¹¹⁸ Proverbs 11:14

D. AFFIRMATION OPTIONS

The elder body may choose at any time and on any matter to seek the affirmation of the congregation or any leadership group within the church such as deacons, father's council, etc. These affirmations may be any of the types defined in Article VI, Section 2.B.

SECTION 2. CONGREGATIONAL AFFIRMATIONS

A. PURPOSE OF CONGREGATIONAL AFFIRMATIONS

The purpose of an affirmation from the congregation, deacons or any other group of the church is the wisdom of seeking the godly counsel of many as taught in scripture.¹¹⁹ This type of counsel can be helpful to the elders in the determining of God's will in a matter. The purpose of an affirmation is not so that the many can make the decision.¹²⁰ The elders will make all final decisions.

B. FORMS OF AFFIRMATIONS

1. Ballot Affirmation:

A ballot vote of eligible members present at a meeting called for the specific purpose of affirming a decision being made by the elders on a particular matter. The meeting shall be called by the elders and publicly announced at least two weeks prior to the meeting. The results of all ballot affirmations will be made public.

2. Verbal Affirmation:

A verbal vote of eligible members present at a meeting called for the specific purpose of affirming a decision being made by the elders on a particular matter. The meeting shall be called by the elders and publicly announced prior to the meeting.

3. General Affirmation:

A vote taken using any method desired by the elders for the purpose of polling the counsel of the congregation or a leadership group (i.e. deacons, father's council, etc.) on any matter.

C. ELIGIBLE MEMBERS

Each Grace Family Church household that has been received as members of the church will be eligible to cast a ballot in ballot affirmations and will be cast by the head of that household.

¹¹⁹ Proverbs 11:14

¹²⁰ Hebrews 13:17

SECTION 3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS

A. SPIRITUALLY SHEPHERD THE CHURCH

1. To preach and teach God's Word.¹²¹
2. To pray.¹²²
3. To maintain doctrinal purity in the church.¹²³
4. To reprove, rebuke, and exhort the church with great patience.¹²⁴
5. To be examples in the church.¹²⁵

B. GOVERN AND OVERSEE ALL THE AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH

1. To establish policies and practices for the church that are consistent with scripture and the purpose of the church.¹²⁶
2. To direct and oversee all of the financial resources and expenditures of the church.
3. To direct and oversee the maintaining of adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of the business of the church.
4. To appoint officers and councils as needed to carry out the business of the church in an orderly and acceptable manner. Any officer or council appointed by the elders is directly responsible to the elders and shall serve as long as the elders see the need.¹²⁷
5. To appoint elders for the church in accordance with the selection process established in these by-laws.¹²⁸
6. To appoint deacons for the church in accordance with the selection process established in these by-laws.¹²⁹
7. To maintain open communication with the church body.

¹²¹ Acts 6:2, 4; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 4:2

¹²² Acts 6:4

¹²³ Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; Jude 3-4

¹²⁴ 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9-11

¹²⁵ 1 Peter 5:3

¹²⁶ 1 Timothy 3:4-5

¹²⁷ Acts 6:3

¹²⁸ Titus 1:5

¹²⁹ Acts 6:2-6

SECTION 4. QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

A. CALLED BY GOD

An elder (pastor) must be a man who has been called by God into the gospel ministry. The evidences for such a call are as follows:

1. Confirmation of the call to the ministry by other believers.¹³⁰
2. Possession of the abilities necessary to serve (giftedness).
3. A deep desire to serve.¹³¹
4. A lifestyle characterized by moral integrity.¹³²

B. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

An elder must affirm and adhere to the membership covenant of this church.¹³³

C. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS

An elder must possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

He shall be:

1. Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach.
2. Husband of one wife.
3. A man whose wife has never been divorced.¹³⁴
4. Temperate, sober, vigilant.
5. Sober-minded, prudent.
6. Given to hospitality.
7. Apt to teach; able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching.
8. Not given to wine.
9. Not violent; not pugnacious.
10. Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle.

¹³⁰ 2 Timothy 2:1-2; 3 John 1:12

¹³¹ 1 Timothy 3:1

¹³² Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3

¹³³ Hebrews 10:25

¹³⁴ Matthew 5:31-32

11. Not a brawler; uncontentious; not soon angry or quick-tempered.
12. Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of base gain.
13. Rules his own household well. His children are faithful; not accused of rebellion to God.
14. Not a novice; not a new convert.
15. Has a good rapport or reputation with outsiders.
16. Not self-willed.
17. Loves what is good.
18. Just, fair.
19. Holy, devout.
20. Self-controlled.

D. ORDINATION

An elder (pastor) must be ordained to the gospel ministry by this church or a church of like faith.¹³⁵

SECTION 5. SELECTION OF ELDERS

A. ELDER SELECTION PROCESS FROM WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

The process by which elders are nominated and appointed to the body of elders is as follows:

1. The elders shall set aside men that they determine have met the qualifications and calling of the office of elder. They shall be declared as being under consideration.
2. The elders shall then make it known to the church that a particular individual is being considered as a candidate for the office of elder.
3. For a period of time, not less than thirty days, the congregation will have the opportunity to prayerfully consider the individual's qualifications for the office of elder. If members for any reason feel that the person may be unqualified, they should go to him in love with discretion and privately discuss their concerns.¹³⁶ If after a discussion with the nominee, the members feel that their concern is unresolved, then they should approach the elders with their concern. During the time that a man is under consideration, there are three process options.

Option 1: The man under consideration can withdraw himself from consideration and the process will cease.

¹³⁵ Acts 14:23

¹³⁶ Matthew 18:15-18; Titus 1:7

Option 2: The elders may deem the man unqualified for whatever reason and the process will cease.

Option 3: The man and the elders agree that the process should continue.

4. After the time of consideration, the elders shall call a special meeting for the purpose of a ballot affirmation of the congregation regarding the man under consideration.
5. After prayerful consideration of the counsel of the congregation, the elders shall vote and make known their decision regarding the man.
6. Upon elder body approval, the man shall immediately assume his position as an elder.

SECTION 6. NUMBER OF ELDERS

The number of elders shall be as many as are qualified and needed to carry out the ministry of elders in the church. The elder body shall determine that number.

SECTION 7. TERM OF ELDERS

The term of office for an elder shall be as long as he is qualified, capable, and desirous of fulfilling the duties of an elder.

SECTION 8. REMOVAL OF ELDERS

Any elder may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established by the remainder of the elder body. Any accusation or action against an elder must be presented to the elder body in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19.

SECTION 9. ELDER BODY MEETINGS

Meetings of the elder body shall be held on a regular basis as determined by the elders. Anyone desiring to approach the elders on any matter or need may feel free to arrange to meet with them.

ARTICLE VII. DEACONS

The New Testament scripture teaches that deacons were set apart by the church as servants to minister to the needs of the Body of Christ. This ministry allowed the elders (pastors) to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.¹³⁷ The office of deacon is one of a servant to the Body of Christ. Any other concept does injustice to the New Testament record found in Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3.

¹³⁷ Acts 6:1-7

SECTION 1. PURPOSE OF DEACONS

The purpose of deacons in the church is as follows:

1. To work and serve alongside the elders to support, encourage, promote, and uphold their ministry.¹³⁸
2. To exemplify spiritual leadership in the fellowship of the church, in their family, personal, and business relationships.¹³⁹
3. To be men of prayer and students of the Word of God.¹⁴⁰
4. To seek to lead the lost to the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁴¹

SECTION 2. QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

A. ACTIVE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A man must be an active member of this church for one year prior to the time of election to the deacon body unless the elder body approves a shorter time.¹⁴²

B. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS

A deacon must possess the qualifications described in scripture.

He shall be:

1. A man of good reputation.¹⁴³
2. A man full of the Spirit and wisdom.¹⁴⁴
3. A man of dignity, not doubled tongued, not addicted to wine, or fond of sordid gain.¹⁴⁵
4. A man who holds the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.¹⁴⁶
5. A man beyond reproach.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁸ Acts 6:3

¹³⁹ 1 Timothy 3:8-16

¹⁴⁰ 1 Timothy 2:8; 2 Timothy 2:14-15

¹⁴¹ Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁴² 1 Timothy 3:10

¹⁴³ Acts 6:3

¹⁴⁴ Acts 6:3

¹⁴⁵ 1 Timothy 3:8

¹⁴⁶ 1 Timothy 3:9

¹⁴⁷ 1 Timothy 3:10

6. A man who is the husband of only one wife.¹⁴⁸
7. A man whose wife has never been divorced.¹⁴⁹
8. A man who is a good manager of his children and his own household.¹⁵⁰
9. A man whose wife does not have a malicious tongue.¹⁵¹

SECTION 3. DEACON SELECTION PROCESS

The process by which deacons are selected is as follows:

1. The elder body shall determine if there is a need for additional deacons for the church.¹⁵²
2. When the elder body determines that there is a need for additional deacons, it shall direct the church to nominate from among the active membership men that it feels meet the qualifications of the office of deacon.¹⁵³
3. Upon nomination by the church the elder body shall prayerfully consider each man nominated. The elders will then appoint those men that it determines are qualified for the office of deacon.¹⁵⁴
4. A special service shall be held so that the elders may present those men that they have appointed to the office of deacon and that the men may be formally ordained to the office of deacon by the laying on of hands.¹⁵⁵

SECTION 4. DEACON OFFICERS

The elder body shall choose from among the deacons a man to serve as the chairman of the deacons. The deacon chairman may appoint additional officers as needed.

SECTION 5. DEACON MEETINGS

The deacon body shall meet as needed for the carrying out of its ministry in the church. The chairman of deacons or the elder body may call a meeting of the deacons.

¹⁴⁸ 1 Timothy 3:12

¹⁴⁹ Matthew 5:31-32

¹⁵⁰ 1 Timothy 3:12

¹⁵¹ 1 Timothy 3:11

¹⁵² Acts 6:1-7

¹⁵³ Acts 6:1-7

¹⁵⁴ Acts 6:1-7

¹⁵⁵ Acts 6:1-7

SECTION 6. TERM OF OFFICE

The term of office for a deacon shall be as long as he is qualified, capable, and desirous of fulfilling the office and duties of a deacon.

SECTION 7. REMOVAL OF DEACONS

Any deacon may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established by the elders of the church.

APPENDIX: MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

GRACE FAMILY CHURCH

Membership Covenant

We trust that we have been brought by Divine Grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give ourselves to Him. Having been baptized by immersion upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully covenant with this fellowship of believers.

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Thus we will endeavor with all earnestness to abstain from divisiveness, railing, gossip, slander or malice against any member of the Body of Christ.

We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church; exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require. Thus we will prefer one another as our Lord commands, and will study to show ourselves approved that we may be equipped to build up our brethren in righteousness and to humbly hold one another accountable to Christ-likeness.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

We will endeavor to bring up such as may be under our care and authority in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear one another's burdens and sorrows.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation to lead a new and holy life. We thus will strive to deny worldly thinking, speech and lifestyles that compromise our witness and dishonor our Lord's holy Name.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We thus voluntarily submit ourselves to the Biblically appointed authority of the elder body, our church's doctrinal essentials, and its common practices in order to both protect and nourish our fellowship.

We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel to all nations.

We will, when we move from this place, 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, ensuring that we leave with the sending forth of our fellowship unto another in good standing.

We therefore, being united by the blood of Christ with the His universal church, joyfully covenant together with Grace Family Church, witnessed by our signatures.

Member _____ Date _____

Member _____ Date _____

Elder _____ Date _____

Elder _____ Date _____

Elder _____ Date _____