

Constitution of Grace Church

ARTICLE 1. DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Foundational Doctrines

1. The Scriptures

We believe that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God and, therefore, inerrant in the original manuscripts. The Bible is our unchanging, final, and complete basis for doctrine. *II Timothy 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:20, 21; John 17:17; Matthew 5:18; John 12:47-48; John 15:12-13; Hebrews 1:1-2; Hebrews 4:12; I Peter 1:25; Psalm 119:89.*

2. The Godhead

We believe there is only one God. But in the unity of the Godhead, there are three eternal and co-equal persons, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Because they each possess the same attributes, perfections, and glory, they are equally worthy of worship and obedience. *Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29; Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14; John 6:27; Hebrews 1:8, Acts 5:3-4; Genesis 1:26.*

3. God the Father

We believe that God the Father is Jehovah. He is the Father over all creation, Israel, our Lord Jesus Christ, and all believers in Jesus Christ. The intrinsic nature of the Father is infinite, Eternal, Holy, Unchanging, Everywhere Present, All Powerful, All Knowing, Just, Love, Truth, and Sovereign. *Exodus 2:6-8; Acts 17:28-29; Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 14:2; Matthew 3:17; John 3:16; Galatians 3:26; Psalm 2:7-9, Ephesians 1:3-6; Hebrews 12:9; I Kings 8:27; Psalm 90:2; I John 1:5; James 1:1; Psalm 139:7-12; Ephesians 1:4, Acts 17:31; Acts 15:18; I John 4:16; Romans 3:4; Deuteronomy 29:29; Revelation 19:6.*

4. God the Son

We believe that in our Lord Jesus Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is constantly and simultaneously God with all His divine attributes and Man with all his human attributes except sin. His deity and humanity are inseparably united forever. He was eternally pre-existent but voluntarily took upon Himself sinless human flesh and nature, being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. *Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8; Luke 19:10; Philippians 2:4-11; Micah 5:2; Hebrews 2:17; Matthew 1:16; Luke 1:26-35; II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; I John 4:2-3.*

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was incarnated to reveal God to man and redeem us from our sin and death. This redemption was accomplished through His death on the cross as our representative. His literal and physical resurrection out of death secures life everlasting for the redeemed. His resurrection body is a pattern of that body which will ultimately be given to all the redeemed. He is now exalted at the right hand of God, where as our High Priest, He intercedes and advocates for us. At God's designated time in the future Jesus will return to set up the Eternal Kingdom, judge the living and the dead and usher in the eternal state.

John 14:8-11; Hebrews 1:13; Luke 19:10; Revelation 5:9; Galatians 3:13; John 1:29; Romans 3:25-26; II Corinthians 5:14-15; Hebrews 10:5-14; I Peter 3:18; I Peter 1: 3-4; John 20:19-29; I Corinthians 15:20-23; Acts 1:9-10, Hebrews 9:24; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; I John 2:1-2.

5. God the Holy Spirit

We believe that God the Holy Spirit is a real person with all the attributes of personality and deity. His ministry in salvation is first convicting man of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and then regenerating the convinced sinner. He instantaneously indwells the believer, baptizes all believers into the body of Christ, and seals the believer's salvation from the day of conversion until the day of redemption. *I Corinthians 2:10-11; Ephesians 4:30; I Corinthians 12:11; Acts 5:3-4; John 16:8-11; Titus 3:5; I Corinthians 6:19; I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13.*

The Spirit's ministry to the Christian includes teaching Biblical truth, guiding us into righteous living according to the will of God, and assuring the Christian of his salvation. Furthermore, He convicts us of sin, restrains us from evil, and controls those yielded to Him. He produces spiritual fruit in the life of the believer and gives spiritual gifts, as He chooses, to every believer. These God-given abilities enable us for a ministry of edification to and for the Church. *John 16:12-15; Romans 8:14, 16, 26; Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:22-23; I Corinthians 12:7,11; II Thessalonians 2:7; I Corinthians 13:8-13; I Corinthians 14:21-22.*

6. The Creation and Fall of Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but he lost his condition of innocence by volitionally sinning in rebellion against God. Consequently, man lost his spiritual life and became spiritually dead in his trespasses. This spiritual death and total depravity of man's nature has been transmitted to the entire human race, with Jesus Christ alone being excepted. Everyone is the recipient of imputed sin, but is also responsible for the execution of personal sins. *Genesis 1:26; Genesis 2:17; Genesis 3:1-21; Ephesians 2:1-3; II Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:12-19; Romans 3:10, 23; Romans 6:23.*

7. Salvation by Grace

We believe that salvation, the gracious gift of God, is freely offered to all, but individually received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. His shed blood enables the forgiveness of sins and satisfies all God's righteous demands for our salvation. Salvation by grace through faith, of necessity excludes all of man's attempts to procure salvation by meritorious efforts of any kind including baptism, partaking of the communion meal, good works, or any such thing. *Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 6:23; Romans 3:24-26; John 3:16-18; I Peter 1:18-19; Acts 16:30-31; Romans 8:1,16, 38-39; I Peter 1:5; I John 5:11-13.*

8. The Church of Jesus Christ

We believe that the Church, which is the Body and Bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism comprised of all born-again persons. Furthermore, we believe that the establishment and continuance of organized local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures. *Matthew 16:16-18; Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:5; I Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:20-23; Ephesians 4:3-10; Acts 14:23; Romans 16:5; I Corinthians 16:19; I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11; Philemon 1-2*

Distinctive Doctrines

9. Angels: Fallen and Unfallen

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings known as angels. One, Lucifer, sinned through pride and became Satan the devil. He influenced a great number of other angels to follow him in his sin and fall. Some of these became demons who seek to promote and carry out evil in the world today. Others are "reserved in everlasting chains until the judgment of that great day." *Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; I Timothy 3:6; II Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6.*

We believe that through Satan sin entered the world. He tempted Adam and Eve and was instrumental in their fall into sin and its moral consequences for them and their posterity. Satan is the enemy of God and the people of God. He actively opposes Christians and their mission as the Church of Jesus Christ. *Genesis 3:1-19; Romans 5:12-14; II Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 6:10-12; I Peter 5:8-9*

However, we also believe a large number of angels did not follow Satan into sin and his resultant fall. These are still holy, in God's presence, and are sent forth as ministering spirits to minister to the heirs of salvation. *Luke 15:10; Ephesians 1:21; Hebrews 1:14; Revelation 7:12.*

We believe man was created and is lower than the angels. Jesus Christ, when He came in the flesh, took upon Himself a lower position than the angels so that in the future He might lift the believer to His ultimate sphere above the angels. *Hebrews 2:6-10*

10. Sanctification

We believe that every saved person is set apart unto God in three ways. First, he is completely sanctified in his positional standing before God. Second, although the believer in Jesus Christ is given a new nature, he retains the old sin nature throughout this life. There is, therefore, progressive sanctification wherein the Christian is to grow in grace and to be changed by the unhindered power of the Spirit. Third, the believer will ultimately be fully sanctified when he shall see the Lord and be "like Him." *John 17:17; II Corinthians 3:18; II Corinthians 5:17; II Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:24; Ephesians 5:25-27; I Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:10, 14; Hebrews 12:10; I John 3:2-3*

11. The Sacraments or Ordinances

We believe that believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only sacraments or ordinances of the church and that they are a scriptural means of testimony for the church in this age. Baptism symbolizes the believer's identification with Christ and the Lord's Supper symbolizes the believer's fellowship with Christ, while memorializing His sacrifice for us. We believe immersion best symbolizes what is meant in the ordinance of baptism. Therefore Grace Church will continue to baptize by immersion as a practice unless there are medical reasons that would prevent this from taking place. *Matthew 28:19; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 18:7-8; Acts 8:36-39; I Corinthians 11:20-34*

12. The Christian's Conduct

We believe that the Christian is called to conduct himself with holiness according to the standard of God's righteousness by the power of the Holy Spirit. We should not pursue, make provision for, or fulfill the sinful desires of the flesh and its nature. When sin occurs, the Christian's fellowship with God is interrupted, but may be restored by simple repentant confession. However, we maintain that our position with God as His child is constant and unbroken. *I Peter 1:14-16; Galatians 5:16; Romans 13:14; Romans 8:1-10; I John 1:5-10; I John 2:1-2; II Corinthians 6:14-18*

13. Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Speaking in Tongues

We believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs without exception when a person receives Christ as their savior. The "sign gift" of speaking in tongues was communication in real languages unknown to the speaker, but never common to all Christians nor a necessary sign of baptism nor the filling of the Holy Spirit. A Christian can experience multiple fillings of the Holy Spirit but only one baptism of the Holy Spirit. *I Corinthians 12:13; Act 2:6-13; Ephesians 5:18; Ephesian 4:5*

14. The Dispensations

We believe in the normal/literal interpretation of the Bible which recognizes the various dispensations to be different administrative relationships of God to His people. Three of these dispensations are subject to extensive revelation in the Scripture, namely the dispensation of Mosaic Law, the present dispensation of the church age consist of all born again believers from Pentecost to the Rapture of the Church and is distinct from Israel, and the future dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom. In every age salvation is the gift of God by grace which is obtained through faith and based upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ. We reject the teaching of those who oppose either the Lord's Supper or baptism as a scriptural means of testimony for the church. *I Corinthians 9:17; Ephesians 3:2-11; Colossians 1:25; Hebrews 11:6; Ephesians 1:10*

15. The Return of Christ

We believe the next great event of prophecy will be the coming of the Lord in the air to receive the Church to Himself. This blessed hope, or rapture of the Church, will be followed by a seven-year tribulation period, during which the Church as the Bride of Christ will be in heaven. Subsequent to the tribulation period, Christ will return to earth with His saints to establish His Millennial Kingdom and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. *John 14:1-3; I Corinthians 15:51-52; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14; Revelation 6:1-19, 21; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 20:1-6; I Thessalonians 1:10; I Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 3:10*

16. The Eternal State

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment. *Matthew 25:46; John 5:28-29; John 11:25-26; Revelation 20:5-13*

We believe that the souls of the redeemed are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection when spirit, soul, and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord. *Luke 23:43; Revelation 20:4-6; II Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:22; I Thessalonians 4:16-17*

We believe that the souls of the unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious misery until the last resurrection, when, with soul and body reunited, they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment and shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment. *Luke 16:19-26; Matthew 25:41-46; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 20:11-15*

Furthermore we believe the Lord's ushering in of the eternal state will bring with it the consummation of the restoration of creation's order unto the glorification of God forevermore. *Romans 8:19-21; I Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 20:7-22:5*

17. The Security of the Believer

We believe that once one places saving faith in Jesus Christ, they then become redeemed. Having been born again, they are marked by the Holy Spirit as God's child and retained in that state by the power of God and are therefore secure in Christ forever, without interruption. *John 10:27-30; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30; Romans 8:38-39*

ARTICLE II: CHURCH OFFICERS

1. Qualifications for Church Officers

- a. All elders shall have been regular attenders of the church for at least one year and are presently members in good standing, and shall, in the opinion of the Elder Board, meet the biblical requirements for an elder as stated in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
- b. All deacons shall have been regular attenders of the church for at least one year and are presently members in good standing, and shall in the opinion of the Elder Board, meet the biblical requirements of a deacon as stated in Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13.

2. Method of Electing Church Officers

- a. All proposed elders shall first be selected by the Elder Board and then elected by a three-fourths vote of the church membership present at a business meeting. The number of congregational elders on the Board shall exceed the number of full-time staff elders.
- b. All proposed deacons shall be selected by the Elder Board and then confirmed by a three-fourths vote of the church membership present at a business meeting.

3. Length of Term for Church Officers

- a. The term of office for a lay elder shall be three years, at the end of which he may be elected at a business meeting to succeed himself for one consecutive term.
- b. The term of service for a deacon shall be one year, at the end of which he may be reconfirmed.

4. Duties of Church Officers

- a. Elders are responsible for the oversight of all spiritual, practical, and governmental functions of the church body.

- b. Deacons are responsible for all duties as outlined in their job descriptions under the oversight of their respective elder from the Board.

5. Dismissal of Church Officers

- a. Elders will be dismissed upon a two-thirds vote of the Elder Board or by a two-thirds vote of the church membership present at a business meeting.
- b. Deacons will be dismissed upon a majority vote of the Elder Board.

ARTICLE III: CHURCH EMPLOYEES

1. Office of Senior Pastor and Associate Pastors

- a. The pastoral candidate shall be selected by the Elder board. The candidate will then be presented to the church membership where a three-fourths affirmative vote at a business meeting will suffice to issue a call to that candidate. Only one candidate may be presented at a time.
- b. In order to qualify as a senior pastor, the candidate must be a graduate of a Bible school or seminary, agree with the church's doctrinal position statement as outlined in Article I of this Constitution, and, in the opinion of the Elder Board, meet the biblical requirements of an elder as stated in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
- c. The primary duties of the senior pastor shall be the spiritual nurture of the congregation and day-to-day administration of church staff and operations. In addition, he will serve as a member of the Board of Elders.
- d. The primary duties of the associate pastor(s) shall be to assist the senior pastor in ministry to the staff and congregation. He (they) too will serve as member(s) of the Elder Board.
- e. The pastors will be dismissed upon both a three-fourths vote of the Elder Board and a two-thirds vote of the church membership present at a business meeting.
- f. All resignations must be submitted in writing to the Elder Board for their consideration.

2. Other Employees

- a. Other employees may be appointed and dismissed at the discretion of the Elder Board.
- b. All resignations must be submitted in writing to the Elder Board for their consideration.

ARTICLE IV: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

1. Eligibility

To be eligible for membership, a person must have received Jesus Christ as his/her personal Savior, have been baptized as a believer, as well as be in agreement with the Foundational Doctrines as outlined in Article 1 of this Constitution. Each member agrees to support the church, as led by God, through prayer, participation in worship services, financial giving, and service.

2. Approval

A person shall be approved for membership by a majority vote of the Elder Board.

3. Removal

The membership list will be kept current by removing members who request removal or transfer, move out of the community, become completely inactive for six months or longer, or join or become active in another church. Removal for any reason requires a majority vote of the Elder Board. (This section will not apply to missionaries, students, or full-time Christian workers, where Grace Church is their home church and no other membership is held.)

4. Discipline

All church discipline shall be vested in the hands of the Elder Board and carried out in accordance with the Scriptures.

5. Dismissal

A person may be dismissed from membership by a majority vote of the Elder Board.

ARTICLE V: CHURCH BUSINESS MEETINGS

1. Annual Business Meetings

- a. The Annual Business Meeting shall be held before January 1 each year.
- b. A two-week written or published notification of the Annual Business Meeting shall be provided.
- c. Only members eighteen and over may vote at the Annual Business Meeting.

2. Other Business Meetings

- a. Other special church business meetings may be called by a majority vote of the Elder Board, or if petitioned in writing by over 50% of the church members eighteen years of age and over.
- b. Prior written or published notification of the business meeting shall be provided.
- c. Only members eighteen and over may vote at a business meeting.

ARTICLE VI: CHURCH FINANCES

1. The Budget

The budget of the church shall be prepared by the Deacon of Finance, reviewed by the Senior Pastor, and submitted to the Elder Board for their approval. The Elder Board will submit the budget to the membership for approval by a majority vote of those present at a business meeting. This process shall be completed before the start of each new year.

2. Real Estate

The buying and selling of real estate shall require a majority vote of the Elder Board and then submission to the congregation where two-thirds majority vote of the church membership present at a business meeting is required for approval of the transaction.

3. Funding

This church shall be solely funded by donations. The only exception shall be interest earned by money placed in saving accounts or other liquid investments which have been allocated for future spending.

ARTICLE VII: CHURCH ASSOCIATIONS

1. Denominational Affiliation

This church shall not join any denomination or denominational organization.

2. Interdenominational Organizations

With the approval of the Elder Board, the church may join interdenominational organizations for the purpose of joint ministries or fellowship. In joining these organizations, there must not be doctrinal compromise.

ARTICLE VIII: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

1. Method of Amendment

This Constitution may be amended by the submission of the proposed amendment in writing by any member to the Elder Board where a three-fourths affirmative vote is required.

2. Approval of Amendment

The proposed amendment is presented to the congregation by the Board of Elders, where a two-thirds affirmative vote of the church membership present at a business meeting is required for final approval.

ARTICLE IX: DISSOLUTION

No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any donor, member, director, or officer of the corporation or any private individual and no donor, member, director, officer of the corporation, or any private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporate assets.

Upon dissolution, any assets of the corporation must be distributed to one or more organizations recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as one organized exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, literary, or educational purposes.