

## **Constitution and Bylaws**

### **Grace Community Church of North Georgia**

#### **Preamble**

We declare and establish this constitution for the purpose of preserving and making secure the principles of our faith that this body may be governed in an orderly manner, consistent with the will of God as revealed in the Bible.

#### **Article One**

##### **Name**

##### **Section 1. Official Name**

The official name of this church is Grace Community Church of North Georgia, Incorporated.

##### **Section 2. Common Name**

The name, which will be used for doing day-by-day business, is Grace Community Church (GCC).

#### **Article Two**

##### **Purpose and Commitments**

##### **Section 1. Purpose**

The purpose of Grace Community Church is to glorify God by standing on, living out, and holding up His truth through proclaiming Jesus Christ (I Timothy 3: 15-16). We will seek to introduce people to Jesus Christ, incorporate those who believe in to local church membership, disciple them in the Christian faith, and equip them for their ministry in the church and for their mission to the world (Ephesians 3:20-21; I Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 1:3-14; Acts 2:40-47; Matthew 28:18-20).

##### **Section 2. Commitments**

- 1) *Teaching the truth.* Teaching is our mission (I Timothy 3:15-16, 4: 1-11, 2 Timothy 4:1-5, Titus 2:1).
- 2) *Prayer.* We are committed to gospel-saturated prayer (I Timothy 2:1-8, 2 Timothy 1:3).
- 3) *Promoting and practicing the Biblical roles of Man and Womanhood* (I Timothy 2:8-15).

- 4) *Biblical Church government* (I Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17-22, Titus 1:5-9).
- 5) *Declaring the purpose of the Church* (I Timothy 3:14-16). The church exists to stand on, live out, and hold up Christ.
- 6) *Development of a discerning mindset* (I Timothy 4:1-11, 2 Timothy 3:1-16).
- 7) *Pursuing personal discipline* (I Timothy 4: 7-10).
- 8) *Biblically-driven worship services* (I Timothy 4:13).
- 9) *Vibrant family fellowship, a “one another community of love”* (I Timothy 5:1-3, Titus 2:1-10).
- 10) *Wise management of our resources individually and congregationally* (I Timothy 6:6-11).
- 11) *Evangelism and missions* (2 Timothy 2:8-13, Titus 2:11-15).
- 12) *The glory of God in all things* (I Timothy 6:13-16).

## **Grace Community Church Distinctives**

### **God-Centered Worship**

*Worship is the priority of God and is to be the passion of His people. Biblical worship comes from the heart and is grounded in truth. The Scripture alone determines how God is to be worshiped. GCC is committed to worship that is defined by and consistent with the Bible. (John 4:2; Romans 12:1-2)*

### **Expository Preaching**

*Expository preaching includes the public reading, explanation, and application of Scripture. It is our passion to “expose the text” rather than impose one’s personal opinions or traditions on the text. Expository preaching at GCC will generally be verse-by-verse teaching through books of the Bible. (2 Timothy 4:1-5; Ezra 8:5-8)*

### **Scriptural Authority**

*We believe that the Bible is infallible— that is without ability to err— because God is its author. We also believe that the Bible is sufficient for salvation and spiritual maturity. Therefore, we are committed to preach and live the Bible. We believe that preaching, counseling, and all ministry must be faithful to the word of God. (2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 19:7-11)*

## **Sovereign Salvation**

*Salvation is wholly a work of God. It is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, based on Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone. God planned salvation before time and elected certain undeserving sinners to life eternal. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to save those sinners by the righteous life, substitutionary death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is the exclusive way of salvation. God receives all who, by His free and sovereign grace, repent of their sins and trust in Jesus alone for salvation. The sovereignty of God in salvation does not negate the responsibility of man to repent, to believe, and to share the gospel. (Romans 8-9)*

## **Church-Fellowship**

*The church belongs to God, and Jesus Christ is the head of the church. When God saves a person, He places that person into His body, the church. In the New Testament, the church met in a variety of places and participated in the life of fellowship. They gathered regularly for instruction, prayer, the ordinances, worship, and fellowship. The church is a “one another” community where its members share in a life of love to God and to one another. The leaders of the church are referred to in the Bible as elders. They are men of God noted for the character of their life, their ability to teach, and their commitment to truth. Deacons serve as models of Christian servanthood. Christians should join themselves to a local congregation for worship, fellowship, and accountability; and they should not forsake church attendance. (Acts 2:42-46)*

## **Article Three Statement of Faith**

**Note:** GCC is a Baptist church, and we esteem many of the time tested confessions, creeds, and catechisms of church history. We are a confessional church. We are in substantive agreement with, both, the First and Second London Baptist Confessions of Faith. Along with the first statement of faith that follows, we also adopt the Abstract of Principles of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the Baptist Faith and Message (2000) of The Southern Baptist Convention. GCC is a Southern Baptist Congregation. The Abstract of Principles and The Baptist Faith and Message are to be viewed through the lens of the first Statement of Faith below. For the sake of clarity, the Statement of Faith below describes some of the great truths that we believe.

### **The Bible**

We believe that the Bible is the written revelation of God to man. The Bible is inspired, infallible, sufficient, and without error. The Bible is to be our only rule of faith and practice (2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119).

## **God**

We believe that there is only one living and true God, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, worthy of all praise and glory; and that He is revealed to us in Scripture in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is three persons, one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19).

## **Creation**

We believe that God created all things in six literal days, the earth is young, and all things were created for His glory (Genesis 1-3; Exodus 20:11, Colossians 1:15-18).

## **Man**

We believe that God created man in His image. Man was created free of sin but, by voluntary sin, fell from that holy and happy state into a depraved condition of spiritual death. In consequence of which, all mankind is now sinful by nature and by choice. Man, left to his own, is lost in sin, unable to save himself, and is under just condemnation to eternal ruin (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; Genesis 3:1-19; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3).

## **Jesus Christ**

We believe that Jesus Christ is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. We believe that Jesus is the eternal Word through Whom and for Whom all things were made. He is the unique and solitary Savior in Who alone there is redemption and forgiveness of sin. The Bible proclaims salvation through Jesus Christ and no other. In His incarnation—an event in historical space and time—Jesus Christ was the perfect union of the human and divine. He was truly God and truly man. In His incarnation Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, without sin, and He remained sinless though out His earthly life. He was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day, he rose from the dead. He ascended to the Father and now rules as King and Judge. He reigns as the Head of the church. He will consummate the age by His physical return to earth as Lord and King (John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 1:2; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; I Corinthians 15; Acts 1:9-11).

## **Salvation**

We believe that all people are sinners and, therefore, are in need of salvation. We believe that the salvation of sinners is all of grace through the person and work of Jesus Christ who took upon Himself our nature, yet was without sin. He honored the law by His personal obedience and made atonement for the sins of His people by His death on the

cross. Salvation is accomplished through the life, death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is now enthroned in heaven where He serves as our sympathetic High Priest, the all-sufficient Savior to those who believe (Ephesians 2:1-22; Isaiah 53:6; John 1:1,14; John 3:16; Matthew 28:19; Hebrews 4:14).

### **Justification**

We believe that justification consists of the pardon of sin and the promise of eternal life to those who believe on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We believe that justification is God declaring repentant sinners righteous based on the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. It is not based on any works of righteousness that man has done. The Christian's sin debt is paid by Christ, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the repentant believer by the grace of God (Romans 5:1; James 2:23; Romans 4:22-25; Ephesians 2:8-10).

### **Repentance and Faith Required**

We believe that salvation from sin and to eternal life is offered freely, and that it is the immediate duty of man to repent of his sin and place faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Acts 3:19).

### **Regeneration**

We believe that in order to be saved we must be regenerated, or born again; regeneration consists of the awakening of the heart and mind of the spiritually dead sinner. The Holy Spirit affects this awakening by His grace and power so as to secure voluntary repentance of sin and faith in Christ Jesus. The evidence of regeneration is found in the changed life of the sinner who has been awakened to the grace of God and now walks in newness of life (John 3:3-7; Ephesians 2:10).

### **Election**

We believe that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He would graciously regenerate, save, and sanctify. We believe that election does not contradict nor negate the responsibility of man to repent and to trust Christ as Savior and Lord. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all that come in faith the Father will receive. The doctrine of election encourages humility, prayer, praise, and confidence. As well, God's election of undeserving sinners is compelling motivation to preach the gospel to all people (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; I Thessalonians 2:13; Ezekiel 18:23, 32; John 3:18-19; 6:37-40, 44; Romans 10:9-15).

## **Preservation of the Saints**

We believe that true believers are eternally preserved by the grace of God and kept from falling from a state of grace by God. Those undeserving sinners who God elected and Jesus died for are called by God, justified by God, and glorified by God to the praise of God. Not one of the true sheep of Christ will ever be lost from God. Salvation is secure because salvation is of the Lord (John 5:24. John 6:37-50; John 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; Romans 8:1, 28-29).

## **Holiness**

We believe that Christians should separate themselves from sin. Out of deep gratitude for the grace of God and because God is worthy of total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate adoring love to God and should fear bringing reproach on His name. Believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1-2; I Corinthians 5:9-13; I Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

## **The Church**

We believe that those who place faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one spiritual body, the Church, of which Christ is the head (I Corinthians 12:12-13, Ephesians 1:22, 4:15, Colossians 1:18).

We believe that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament, and that members of the one spiritual body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (Acts 14:23, 27; Acts 20:17,28, Philippians 1:1; I Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

We believe that Christ is the supreme authority for the church. He is the head of the church, and church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through Christ. Christ makes His will known through the Bible (Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 1:18).

## **Elders/Deacons**

We believe that the Biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly (in the case of elders) are elders (men who are also called bishops, overseers, and pastors), and deacons. Elders and deacons must meet the Biblical qualifications. The leaders are to lead as servants of Christ, and the entire congregation is to be submissive to Biblical leadership (I Timothy 3:1-13; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17).

## **Discipleship/Accountability/Church**

We believe in discipleship and mutual accountability to one another as well as the need for discipline of sinning members (Matthew 28:19-20; Matthew 18:5-14; Matthew 18:15-22).

We believe that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21).

## **Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

We believe that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Christian baptism by immersion is the testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Lord, and it is symbolic of his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life. It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:38-42; Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:1-11). The Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes, and it should always be preceded by serious self-examination. We believe that, while the elements of communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Savior (I Corinthians 11:28-32; I Corinthians 10:16).

## **Church Attendance**

We believe that members of a local assembly should faithfully attend the services of that assembly and are to be faithful in discipleship, worship, missions, financial stewardship, and evangelism. Each congregational gathering is an opportunity to encourage love and faithfulness among fellow members (Hebrews 10:25).

## **The Lord's Day**

We believe in the doctrine of the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is a day devoted to the Lord and provides opportunity for worship, study, deeds of mercy, and witness (Revelation 1:10; Acts 2).

## **Satan**

We believe that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. 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 in the Garden of Eden. 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, and he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41;

Revelation 12:9-10; Genesis 3:1-15; Matthew 4:1-11; Romans 16:20; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

### **Death/Resurrection**

We believe that at death the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ, that there is a separation of soul and body, and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the first resurrection when soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord. Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; I Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21-24; I Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 20:4-6; Philippians 3:21; I Corinthians 15:35-44; 50-54; I Corinthians 5:8).

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men; the saved to life eternal and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11; 19-23; I Corinthians 4:14; Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15).

### **The Return of Jesus**

We believe that Jesus Christ will bodily and visibly return to the earth with His saints. He will be recognized as King of Kings and the Lord of Lords (Revelation 1:7. 19:11-16; Acts 1:9-11).

We believe that the saved will ultimately enter the eternal state of glory with God and will dwell forever in the heavenly city where they will enjoy fellowship with God and one another forever. Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver the kingdom to God the Father, and that in all spheres the triune God will reign and be praised (Revelation 21:2; John 17:3; Revelation 21,22; I Corinthians 15:24-28).

*The above statement of faith of Grace Community Church is both compiled from a variety of sources and written by the leadership of Grace Community Church. The statement is limited in its design, emphasizing some of the fundamentals of our faith. This is not an all-inclusive statement of our beliefs but an attempt to systematically express some of our key doctrines. It should be read in conjunction with the whole of the constitution, bylaws, and the statement of faith which follows; and it is also adopted by Grace Community Church. The faith statements of Grace Community Church should be carefully examined by the Bible. We adopt the above and the following statements of faith as official statements for Grace Community Church.*



## **The Abstract Of Principles**

*When the original charter of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was adopted in 1858 it contained the following statement, which continues as a part of the "fundamental laws." "Every professor of the institution shall be a member of a regular Baptist Church; and all persons accepting professorships in this Seminary shall be considered, by such acceptance, as engaging to teach in accordance with, and not contrary to, the Abstract of Principles hereinafter laid down, a departure from which principles on his part shall be grounds for his resignation or removal by the trustees." GCC adopts " The Abstract of Principles" as one of our statements of faith to indicate our solidarity with a historic Southern Baptist confession.*

### **I. The Scriptures**

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain, and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.

### **II. God**

There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of himself, all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience.

### **III. The Trinity**

God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being.

### **IV. Providence**

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.

### **V. Election**

Election is God's eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life -- not because of foreseen merit in them, but of his mere mercy in Christ -- in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified.

### **VI. The Fall of Man**

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; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors.

## **VII. The Mediator**

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

## **VIII. Regeneration**

Regeneration is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, who quickeneth 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. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone.

## **IX. Repentance**

Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being, by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbleth himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things.

## **X. Faith**

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 is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness.

## **XI. Justification.**

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith.

## **XII. Sanctification**

God's word and Spirit dwelling in them also sanctify those who have been regenerated. This sanctification is progressive through the supply of Divine strength, which all saints

seek to obtain, pressing after a heavenly life in cordial obedience to all Christ's commands.

### **XIII. Perseverance of the Saints**

Those whom God hath 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, through neglect and temptation, into sin, 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.

### **XIV. The Church**

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 societies or churches; and to each of these churches he hath given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which he hath appointed. The regular officers of a church are bishops, or elders, and deacons.

### **XV. Baptism\*<sup>1</sup>**

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 his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of his giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. It is prerequisite to church fellowship, and to participation in the Lord's Supper.

### **XVI. The Lord's Supper\*<sup>2</sup>**

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 other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with him, and of their church fellowship.

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<sup>1</sup> We are in substantive agreement with the Abstract. However, our present practices, related to Baptism and The Lord's Supper, are as follows: Baptism is for believers only, and by immersion, and is a requirement for church membership. However, at present we allow visitors, with a credible profession of faith (as best we can discern) and who are members of an evangelical church, and not under church discipline, to partake of the Lord's Supper.

<sup>2</sup> At the present time we use grape juice instead of wine. However, we are not opposed to using wine and our practices could change if we come to the conclusion that Scripture commands wine.

## **XVII. The Lord's Day<sup>\*3</sup>**

The Lord's Day is a Christian institution for regular observance and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, resting from worldly employments and amusements, works of necessity and mercy only excepted.

## **XVIII. Liberty of Conscience**

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word or not contained in it. Civil magistrates being ordained of God, subjection in all lawful thing commanded by them ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

## **XIX. The Resurrection**

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God -- the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised.

## **XX. The Judgment**

God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when everyone shall receive according to his deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life.

## **The Baptist Faith and Message (2000)**

*For a full copy of The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (BF&M) see: <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>*

*A portion of BF&M is excerpted below. This excerpt is from XVIII. The Family*

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

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<sup>3</sup> While we agree that Sunday is the Lord's Day and should be a day that is set apart for "exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private" we do not take the view that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. Christians should seek to apply Scripture, under the Lordship of Christ, as they determine what activities or work to engage in on Sunday. It is essential that Christians gather on Sunday for congregational worship.

provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of 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.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

#### **Article Four** **Church Covenant**

*We adopt the covenant of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington D.C. We also think that Jonathan Edward's statement prefacing his resolutions is appropriate.*

*Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God's help, I do humbly entreat Him, by His grace, to enable me to keep these resolutions, so far as they are agreeable to His will, for Christ's sake. - Jonathan Edwards*

“Having, as we trust, been brought by Divine Grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to Him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

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.

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

We will endeavor to bring up such as may at anytime be under our care, 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 each other'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 now to lead a new and holy life.

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 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 through 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.

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

## **Article Five** **Membership**

### **Section 1. Becoming a Member**

*Paragraph 1.* Membership in this local church shall be open to anyone who makes a credible (Biblically defined) profession of faith in Jesus Christ for his/her salvation and who signifies (or has signified) such profession by water baptism. No one shall automatically/necessarily become a member by *mere* transfer of letter or statement. Those desiring to transfer a letter or statement, (like everyone else), must go through new member requirements. No one shall become a member of this church who is under the discipline of another congregation until such matters are resolved.

*Paragraph 2.* The person desiring membership in Grace Community Church should make request to one of the elders. They will then be given written information concerning the doctrine and policies of Grace Community Church. Each person shall agree to

complete new members training classes, subscribe to the statement of faith of Grace Community Church, complete a membership application, and indicate support for the doctrine, policy, leadership, and general direction of the church. Each candidate for membership will share his/her testimony and understanding of the gospel with an elder. This may be done in writing or verbally, as determined by the elders. After fulfillment of the above requirements and with the support of the elders, the person will be presented to the whole congregation for encouragement and affirmation. The applicant shall publicly affirm his/her membership commitment and be publicly acknowledged as a member of Grace Community Church.

## **Section 2. Responsibilities of Members**

*Paragraph 1.* Members are to exercise their spiritual gifts for the mutual benefit of the church.

*Paragraph 2.* Members of Grace Community Church must be willing to live and serve according to the Bible. No member of Grace Community Church may have a teaching ministry in the church that is contrary to the doctrinal positions of the church. As well, no member may have a teaching ministry within the church *at all* unless recognized by the elders of Grace Community Church.

*Paragraph 3.* Members are responsible to be diligent in the study of Scripture and prayer, faithful in worship, active in evangelism, faithful in giving, diligent in keeping the spirit of the church covenant, and submissive to spiritual leadership. Each member will be responsible to do his/her part in the ministry of the church (Ephesians 4:12; I Peter 4:10,11). This calls for regular attendance and participation in the life and services of the church, including contribution of financial support and willing use of spiritual gifts in the work of the ministry (Hebrews 10:24-25; 2 Corinthians 8:1-8, 9:5-14).

*Paragraph 4.* If a recommendation from any member for the improvement of the whole body is offered, it should be addressed to the elders who will consider the request, if practical.

## **Section 3. Meetings of the Membership**

Meetings of the membership shall be called by the elders to share pertinent information about needs in the church body and to overview the status of the various ministries of the church. This could include matters pertaining to the Constitution and Bylaws, the call and dismissal of full time staff, the acquisition or disposition of church property, the annual budget, and other such matters. The elders will use wisdom and discretion in determining if or when such meetings will be called, and which items should be discussed, if any, at such meetings. The elders will give at least one-week notice of such meetings.

#### **Section 4. Non-Disciplinary Removal from Active Membership**

Dismissal or removal from the membership of GCC shall be made, by the elders and after due counsel, for the following reasons:

- 1) Transfer of Letter- Any member in good standing may request that a letter of membership be transferred to another fellowship of like faith and practice. No letter will be granted for one who is under the corrective discipline of this church until such matters are resolved. No letter will be granted for a member who wishes to transfer to another church which, based on the judgment of the elders, is not loyal to Christ and His Word.
- 2) Non-Letter Transfer- Any member who unites with another church without request for a letter of recommendation will be dropped from the membership after counsel with both the individual and with the receiving church (if it is possible for this counsel to occur).
- 3) Physical Death- When a member dies his/her name will be removed from the membership roll.

#### **Section 5. Disciplinary Removal from Membership**

A person may be dropped from the membership for any of the following reasons:

##### **A. Inactivity/Inappropriate Absenteeism**

*Paragraph 1.* It is the responsibility of each church member to be faithful in attendance and participation in the meetings and ministries of the congregation, unless hindered by illness or other providential circumstances. To be lax or indifferent toward faithful participation in church life will indicate a need for admonition (Hebrews 10:24-25).

*Paragraph 2.* It is the responsibility of the elders to oversee member's regularity of participation and to examine the possible reasons for inactivity. If inactivity is consistent without adequate reason, the elders shall seek to reclaim to fellowship those who have absented themselves. The other members of the church will also seek to restore the inactive one to active participation in the church. If there is not an appropriate response from the individual, then the elders, after prayer and counsel, will ultimately remove that person from official membership (see Article VIII: Church Discipline).

*Paragraph 3.* A member of this church who, willfully and without plausible reason, demonstrates a lack of commitment to the attendance of the services of GCC for a period of three months shall be moved to an inactive membership roll. If there is renewed commitment to faithful church attendance then, after counsel, the inactive member shall be returned to active membership. If there is no



consistent, renewed commitment to faithful church attendance after a total period of six months, then they shall be dropped from the membership of Grace Community Church, after all church discipline issues are resolved. Notice will be given to the individual and to the church of such action. The elders will give oversight to this process and determine what constitutes lack of faithfulness regarding church membership. No person on the inactive membership roll can participate in any church voting procedure.

- B. Continuous Sinful Conduct and/or Erroneous Teaching When a member continues to knowingly ignore the doctrines of Scripture in daily walk or teaching, so that his/her life or erroneous teaching hinders the peace of the church or its testimony, the elders may recommend the withdrawal of fellowship and/or termination of membership of the offending member. This shall be done following the guidelines in Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians 5:3-5,13, and other relevant passages of Scripture. The elders will communicate such a decision to the congregation.

## **Section 6. Reapplication for Membership**

If a former member chooses to apply for membership, then he/she may do so according to the general requirements for membership. If they previously left the church in good standing and have been faithful in their present church, then they will not be required to enroll in the new member's class. They will, however, be required to meet with an elder in order to be updated and instructed as to the doctrine, policy, and direction of the church. In cases of corrective discipline, it is recognized that the goal of all discipline is a holy walk under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and obedience to His Word. The right to withdraw fellowship is in harmony with the teachings of the Bible and is balanced with a call to restore such persons who have given satisfactory evidence of repentance (Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6). When a person gives such evidence, the elders shall communicate to the entire church that the person has been restored to full membership.

## **Section 7. Non-Resident Membership**

*Paragraph 1.* There will be no status of non-resident membership in Grace Community Church except in rare cases of being confined to a personal care facility or being homebound. Students, military personnel, etc, are still considered resident members of Grace Community Church subject to general membership guidelines, yet should be active in worship services where they attend school or serve, if possible. Grace Community Church has a responsibility to disciple and care for members in personal care facilities, those who are homebound, students and military personnel.

*Paragraph 2.* When a member of Grace Community Church re-locates to another area and can no longer actively participate in the ministry of Grace Community Church, it is expected that, within a period of nine months, they will join a fellowship of like faith and practice in the area to which they have moved. This time may be lengthened after

counsel with the elders. It is the responsibility of the member who has relocated to inform Grace Community Church of their new church affiliation. After a period of nine months (or agreed on extension) the member will be dropped from the membership of Grace Community Church.

## **Article Six** **Affiliation**

*Paragraph 1.* Grace Community Church maintains the right to govern its own affairs in accordance with Scripture and is independent of any denominational *control*. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation with other churches and world missions, GCC voluntarily affiliates with the Southern Baptist Convention. Historical theological convictions and voluntary contributions to doctrinally approved missions maintain this affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention. This affiliation may also be supported by sending messengers to the annual conventions for voting the doctrinal, ethical, and procedural positions that are representative of Grace Community Church. It is our desire to support those ministries, which the elders believe are doctrinally, morally, and ethically sound.

*Paragraph 2.* Affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention is for the purpose of accomplishing common endeavors with other churches as a means of expressing love and unity. Our affiliation, however, does not in any way hinder us from associating ourselves with any other groups of churches or mission endeavors, which we believe are doctrinally and practically sound. The extent of support of the Southern Baptist Convention and any other missionary organization shall be voluntary.

## **Article Seven** **Church Government, Leadership, and Officers**

### **Section 1. The Chief Shepherd**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd of this congregation. It is before Him that all other leadership must bow (Ephesians 1:22-23; Matthew 23:8-11; I Peter 5:1-4; Colossians 1:18). He communicates His will for the church through the Bible. He shepherds the flock through the leaders of the church to whom he has given specific leadership gifts and who are Biblically qualified.

### **Section 2. Elders**

- A. General Statement In its operation, the church will be governed by a group of godly men called elders. These shall be men in whose lives the working of the Holy Spirit is evident, who have given a worthy witness of the authority of Christ in their lives, and who have met the qualifications given in the Bible. Authority for the day-to-day ministry will reside in the hands of the elders whether in full-time compensated service or otherwise. The business of Grace Community Church will then be conducted under the oversight of the elders. The elders will

be responsible for the oversight and government of the church as examples to the flock of God, as those who must give an account to God (I Peter 5:1-5; Hebrews 13:17; I Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17-25; Acts 20:28-37; Titus 1:5-9). The elders are to act in a manner well pleasing to God as examples worth following in Christ Jesus, recognizing that Christ is the head of the church.

B. General Considerations In no way is the elder system of church government designed to act in a dictatorial manner (I Peter 5:1-4). If there is ever a question or disagreement with the direction that the elders are leading the church, any church member with a question or objection should submit such in writing and, if need be, in person to the elders. The question or objection is to be carefully discussed, prayed over, and handled with the utmost sensitivity to the working of the Holy Spirit in every member of GCC. After prayer, counsel, and with sensitivity, the elders will then determine how to respond. The process should always be handled in love with concern for the will of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the unity of the body. Elders, and all church members, should be humble, loving, sensitive, and Biblical in dealing with one another. Elders will strive to effectively communicate with the church body. Before major decisions, the elders will give the church a period of time to respond and/or appeal. The period of time will be determined on a case-by-case basis by prayer and consideration of the circumstances at hand.

C. Qualifications of Elders Each elder must be an active member of this church and possess the following qualifications:

- 1) Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-7)
- 2) Husband of one wife; a one-woman man (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7)
- 3) Temperate, sober, vigilant (I Timothy 3:2)
- 4) Sober-minded, prudent (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- 5) Of good behavior, orderly, respectable (I Timothy 3:2)
- 6) Given to hospitality (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- 7) Apt to teach; able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9)
- 8) Not given to wine (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- 9) Not violent, not pugnacious (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- 10) Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle (I Timothy 3:3)

- 11) Not a brawler, not contentious; not soon angry or quick-tempered (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- 12) Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of base gain (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- 13) Rules well his own house. His children are faithful; not accused of rebellion (I Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6)
- 14) Not a novice; not a new convert (I Timothy 3:6)
- 15) Has a good report or reputation with outsiders (I Timothy 3:7)
- 16) Not self-willed (Titus 1:7)
- 17) A lover of that which is good (Titus 1:8)
- 18) Just, fair (Titus 1:8)
- 19) Holy, devout (Titus 1:8)
- 20) Self-controlled (Titus 1:8)

D. Responsibilities of Elders The elders shall be responsible for:

- 1) Exercising a general superintendence over the church, the flock of God (Acts 20:28; I Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17; I Peter 5:1-4)
- 2) Showing forth a consistent study of and ability to teach the Word of God (I Timothy 5:17; 3:2; 2 Timothy 4; I Thessalonians 5:12; Titus 1:9)
- 3) Be effective stewards over their entrusted ministry (Titus 1:7)
- 4) Give authoritative leadership to the church (I Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17)
- 5) Shepherd the church of God by giving diligent labor, caring leadership, and guided counsel in the Word (I Thessalonians 5:12; Romans 12:9; I Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17; Hebrews 13:7; I Peter 5:1-4)
- 6) Exercise pastoral care (I Thessalonians 5:14-15, James 5:14), and hospitality (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).

The responsibilities of the elders include teaching, shepherding, overseeing, ruling, setting a godly example, and in humility demonstrating love for Christ and love for each

member of the church. From the elders will come the pastor-teacher who makes as a priority the ministry of the Word and prayer (I Timothy 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; I Timothy 5:17; Acts 6:4).

E. Ordination of Elders Those selected and approved as elders shall be ordained as elders to serve in this local body. The ordination shall follow the teaching of Scripture concerning the laying on of hands (I Timothy 4:14).

F. Elders/General

*Paragraph 1.* The elders are commissioned to oversee the church under the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ (I Peter 5:4). The elders shall prayerfully seek unanimous agreement of all in attendance at elder's meetings, in all matters. In matters of compensation or discipline of an elder, the elder in question may be asked to abstain from decision making until matter is resolved.

- 1) The pastor-teacher acts as the Chairman of the elders. In case of his inability to attend or execute his duty as Chairman, he will appoint a substitute from among the elders.
- 2) The pastor-teacher is given the option, if he chooses, to appoint a Chairman of the elders so that he may be relieved of duties that might hinder the careful attention to the study of Scripture and prayer. Or, if the pastor-teacher deems it wise in counsel with other elders, the pastor-teacher may allow another elder to serve as chairman.
- 3) When additional elders are needed or if there is a need for the substitution of existing elders, the elders will compile a list of qualified nominees for the office of elder. The elders will determine which names, if any, shall be placed on the nomination list to be considered. The elders shall review and interview nominees regarding their desire to serve and their qualifications. The elders shall receive completed questionnaires and testimonies from each nominee as part of the review process. The elders will then submit the names of those deemed qualified to the congregation and allow the congregation a period of 14 days to respond in writing to the elders if there is any Biblical basis for any nominee not to be ordained as an elder. The elders will seek to resolve any such issues; and then, if the elders approve the candidate(s), the nominees shall be affirmed by the congregation, ordained, and assume office.
- 4) Any elder may be disciplined by a decision of elders. This shall be done within the confines of I Timothy 5:19-20. Any elder may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or if his inability to serve is established in the minds of the remainder of the elders by unanimous consent.

- 5) The staff of the church may or may not be elders of the church. Being a paid staff member does not automatically render a person an elder. All who serve as elders must be qualified according to Scriptural qualifications. Paid staff, if appointed as elders, will be of equal authority with non-paid elders and employment will be a matter of separate and distinct consideration. A paid member of the staff may cease to be an employee of the church but potentially remain as an elder and an unpaid elder, may become a member of the staff and receive commensurate compensation.
- 6) Quorum- A majority of elders currently serving shall constitute a quorum. There must be unanimous consent of all elders in attendance in deciding a matter. Whenever the matter to be considered concerns calling or dismissing a pastor or buying or selling real estate a quorum shall consist of not less than two-thirds of the members of the elders.

G. Ministry Councils The elders will seek to oversee the various ministries of the church through Ministry Councils when deemed necessary.

- 1) Ministry Councils will be led by an elder.
- 2) Other Ministry Council Members will be approved by the elders.
- 3) In the Ministry Council, unanimity is stressed on all matters. In cases where unanimity cannot be reached, the matter shall be brought before the full body of elders for resolution.
- 4) Any member of the church, not under the discipline of the church, may serve on a ministry council upon nomination by and approval of the elders.
- 5) An elder in charge of a ministry council may also serve as a member of other ministry councils. No one person may act as Chairman of two ministry councils except at the discretion of the elders.
- 6) The elders may establish Ministry Councils as are deemed necessary for the fulfillment of the stated purposes and functions for the church as given in this Constitution and Bylaws.

H. Meetings The specific Ministry Councils will meet with the elders as often as necessary to carry on duties.

I. Accountability.

*Paragraph 1.* The elders are a self-disciplining body with members accountable to one another. In accordance with I Timothy 5:19, there can also be congregational participation. Each elder is accountable to all of the elders and subject to both formative and corrective discipline, as are all members of the church.

*Paragraph 2.* The elders will report to the congregation on the ministries of the church at least once a year.

- J. Tenure of Service No limit is placed upon the time that an elder may serve if he is faithful to his calling. The pastor-teacher should be encouraged to take a sabbatical for study and refreshment from time to time.

### **Section 3. Deacons**

- A. General Statement The New Testament recognizes the ministry of both elders and deacons in the local church. deacons exemplify faithful Christian service. As distinct officers in the local church they are referred to in the plural (Philippians 1:1) and are mentioned in addition to the elders in I Timothy 3:8- 13). The government of the church rests upon the elders (I Timothy 3:14; Hebrews 13:17) while deacons give needed assistance in the various ministries of the church.
- B. Qualifications of Deacons. The qualifications of deacons are detailed in I Timothy 3:8-13.
- C. Responsibilities of Deacons The deacons shall help the elders in the shepherding of the saints, assist the pastor at communion and baptismal services, aid in the general care of the church, and perform other duties as assigned by the elders. The deacons will give special attention to serving the families of the church, engaging in ministries of mercy through hospital visitation, comfort during times of grief, etc.
- D. Tenure of Service No limit is placed upon the time that a deacon may serve. Service is based on continued qualification as determined by the elders.
- E. Nomination of Deacons The elders and deacons serve as the Deacon Nominating Council. This council shall receive the names of nominees from elders and other church members regarding a candidates desire to serve and their qualifications. This Council shall receive completed questionnaires and testimonies from each nominee as part of the review process. The Council will then, via the approval of the elders, inform the congregation of such nominations and allow the congregation a period of 14 days to respond in writing to the elders if there is any Biblical basis for any nominee to not be ordained as a deacon. In the event of such a response from a member of the congregation, the elders shall review the response with the nominee and, if necessary, with the writer of the response in order to determine proper disposition of the issue raised. After the passage of 14 days and the satisfactory resolution of any issues as determined by the elders, the elders will present the deacons for affirmation to the church. The congregation, at a special called meeting, will publicly affirm the deacons. Once affirmed, the newly elected deacons shall assume office immediately upon ordination or, in the case of previously ordained deacons, immediately upon affirmation. The elders

will then proceed with the ordination of the nominees approved as deacons not yet ordained.

#### **Section 4. The Role of Women in the Local Church**

*Paragraph 1.* The place and service of women in the New Testament is evident in the Gospel records (Luke 1:26-56, 2:36-38, 8:2-3; Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41), the account of the early church (Acts 1:14, 5:14, 6:1, 9:36, 12:12, 16:14, 17:34, 18:2) and the letters to the believers throughout the Mediterranean world (Romans 16:1, 3, 6, 13, 15; I Corinthians 1:11; Philippians 4:2-3). The Bible teaches women played an important role in the life of each congregation.

*Paragraph 2.* In Galatians 3:28, Paul points out that “there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” There is a spiritual equality before the Lord. There is also a distinction of the roles of men and women in the ministries of the local church. Women have a vital responsibility within the context of the church and family. For example, I Timothy 5:9-10 gives an account of the godly widow who had been faithful to God throughout her life. She was a one-man woman, well reported for good works, a lover of children, active in hospitality to strangers and ministry to the saints. Her life is characterized by being faithful in every good work.

Titus 2:3-5 indicates the responsibility for older women to live a godly life and to teach the younger women to love their husbands and children and to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, obedient to their own husbands.

*Paragraph 3.* The Bible reveals the high and holy calling of the Christian woman (Proverbs 31). Women are to order their appearance with attention to modesty in dress, reflecting a godly heart attitude. In the context of the church, it is not permissible for women to teach men or to have authority over men in the church. This testifies of God’s order in creation. Therefore, the mandate is not based on culture but creation (I Timothy 2:9-15). We believe, therefore, that godly women who are members of our church can and should serve in a variety of ways including teaching other women, teaching children, serving on ministry teams, ministering to Christians, evangelizing the world as all Christians are called to do, being examples of hospitality—all under the oversight of their husbands (if married).

At Grace Community Church we respect and appreciate the tremendous contribution of godly women to the church throughout Christian history. However, we do not permit women to teach or have authority over men in the church in any capacity nor to lead any policy or doctrinal council in the church.

*Paragraph 4.* Women may serve in staff positions that involve the instruction of children and women, involves service to the poor, hospitality to strangers and fellow Christians, and in other administrative responsibilities. Any staff position will be in keeping with I



Timothy 2:1-15, and the staff member will be accountable to the elders in general and to the pastor-teacher in particular. Women serving on the staff of the church must also meet the Biblical responsibilities of homemaking. Women with children at home are generally discouraged from pursuing staff opportunities.

*Paragraph 5.* I Timothy 5:3-6 speaks of a list of widows who have provision made for them by the church. This reveals the importance of widows in the local church and serves as an example of the kind of care and concern widows and others in need are to receive in the church.

*Paragraph 6.* There is ample evidence in the Bible of a fundamental Christian assertion of the intrinsic worth of human personality, whether it is male or female (Galatians 3:27-28). The mutual dependence of men and women and their common origin in God teach that the male has no superior place in the Lord (I Corinthians 11:11-12). GCC women will be encouraged to serve in the capacity in which the Lord enables and Scripture directs. This opens up many avenues of service. It is important to understand in the matter of service in the local church that God has given specific roles to both men and women. The roles given to women complement and enhance the total ministry of the church (Romans 16:1; I Timothy 2:9-15; 5:10, 14, 16; Titus 2:3-5). It should be remembered that the Word of God never seeks to hamper men or women in their service but rather seeks to direct them in fulfilling their responsibilities in a way that promotes holiness, fruitfulness, unity in church and family (Ephesians 4-5; Colossians 3).

## **Section 5. Church Staff**

### **A. Pastor-teacher**

- 1) Qualifications The qualifications of the pastor (or pastors) are found in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The pastor-teacher must be spiritually and intellectually qualified to lead the church as an undershepherd of God. He is also to preach, to train, to provide leadership, and to work with the other elders to implement the Constitution and Bylaws. The pastor-teacher must become a member of this church on the acceptance of his call.

- 2) Responsibilities

*Paragraph 1.* The responsibilities of the pastor shall be: (a) to earnestly carry on a preaching, teaching, and training ministry, with the aim of bringing each member to a place of spiritual maturity and fruitfulness, and to a place of spiritual harmony with the rest of the church body; (b) to be an example in Christian living and dedication; (c) to oversee the administering of the ordinances; (d) to serve as Chairman or Chairman Ex-Officio of the elders as desired, and by virtue of his office to serve, at the discretion of all of the elders, as a leader on church boards, ministry councils, task forces, committees, and other leadership groups. The pastor will absent himself from final decisions by the elders on matters to do with his compensation; (e) to

endeavor to fill the pulpit on a regular and consistent basis. In times of absence the pastor-teacher will determine who will fill the pulpit unless he delegates that responsibility to the elders. The pastor has no authority independent of the rest of the elders and the rest of the elders should not act independently of the pastor nor meet without his awareness and agreed upon involvement.

*Paragraph 2.* All members, elders, and deacons shall encourage, respect, and support the office of the pastor-teacher (I Thessalonians 5:12-13). To aid him in carrying out his ministry, the church should encourage him to make as a priority of his time the ministry of the Word and prayer. He is to be faithful in preparation that he may accurately teach the Scripture. The church is to serve alongside of the pastor-teacher, doing the work of the ministry, that he may give himself wholly to the ministry of the Word.

*Paragraph 3.* The pastor-teacher shall serve for an undesignated period of time. He shall give three months notice to the church through the elders, if he plans to resign. The elders shall give the pastor-teacher three months notice if it is determined that a change in pastoral leadership would be wise and/or required by Scripture. If the church desires a change in pastoral leadership, for reasons that are not explicitly Biblical in nature, then the church will seek continual provision for the pastor and family for not less than six months.

*Paragraph 4.* In either case both the church or the pastor-teacher should handle the matter humbly, prayerfully, and in love. Both the pastor-teacher, the elders, and the entire congregation should be sensitive to the needs of the other. The elders should strongly consider the desires of the congregation before taking steps to remove the pastor-teacher from his responsibilities. By mutual consent, the three-month period may be lengthened or shortened.

- 3) Calling a pastor-teacher In the pursuit of a new pastor-teacher the decision to extend the call is made by the elders. The candidate should be carefully examined and a full background check as to his character, integrity, and academic credentials should be made. He should be questioned in depth especially from the epistle of I Timothy. The congregation will be given a period of 14 days to pray and to respond in writing to the elders if there are any questions or concerns. The elders will determine the proper resolution of issues if any are raised. After the passage of 14 days and the satisfactory resolution of any issues as determined by the elders, they shall ask for congregational affirmation and proceed with the call of pastor-teacher.

## B. Staff Elders, Ministerial Staff, and Support Staff

### 1) Qualifications of Staff Members.

*Paragraph 1.* A staff elder must meet the qualifications of an elder given in Article VII Section 2C. In addition there must be evidence of a call to a specific ministry with the spiritual gifts and adequate training needed to fulfill the task to which he has been called.

*Paragraph 2.* Staff members, having acknowledged and exhibited a call to ministry, must meet the qualifications in I Timothy 3:8-13, since those qualifications relate to service in the local church.

*Paragraph 3.* Secretarial/Administrative and other support staff must be faithful to Christ and His church and be growing in their knowledge of and application of Scripture. There must be nothing in their lives that would bring reproach on the cause of Christ through this local church.

2) Responsibilities of a Staff Member Each staff member will be responsible to fulfill their calling to specific ministry as given by the pastor-teacher and in conjunction with both the particular ministry Council with which he or she serves and the elders. All staff members are directly responsible to the pastor-teacher.

3) Calling a Staff Member Under the leadership of the pastor-teacher and the rest of the elders the church may call additional ministerial staff and support staff as needed to serve in the ministries of the church. The pastor-teacher with the approval of the elders may add support staff, including secretarial/administrative staff as necessary. Ministerial staff positions are selected by the pastor-teacher in conjunction with the elders and presented to the entire congregation for affirmation. The congregation will be given a period of 14 days to respond in writing to the elders with any issues.

4) Compensation The elders will determine the compensation of any staff member. This will be done prayerfully with an attitude towards generosity, with utmost sensitivity towards the one to be compensated (Luke 10:7, I Corinthians 9:14; I Timothy 5:17).

### 5) Board of Trustees and Officers

a) For the purpose of representation before government and other official bodies the elders will serve as the Board of Trustees.

b) If the elders feel it wise, they may appoint a Board of Trustees that are separate from the elders. The Board of Trustees may include some of the elders; all the members of the Board are to be accountable to the elders.

- c) The Board of Trustees shall include a chairman and a secretary.
- d) Other Officers of GCC may include, but are not limited to: treasurer, clerk, and Sunday school teachers. All must be chosen under the direction and discretion of the elders. At least one elder must be giving direct oversight to the selection of any officer or teacher, and that officer or teacher must be approved by the elders. Each year a directory of all staff, elders, deacons, teachers, ministry councils, and officers will be provided to the entire church.

## **Article Eight** **Church Discipline**

### **Section 1. Formative Discipline**

Every disciple of the Lord is to walk under the discipline of the Lord Jesus and His Word. Mutual submission to one another in the reverence of Christ (Ephesians 5:21) is a part of that discipline. Along with that, God has called the church to submission and obedience (I Peter 5:5; Hebrews 13:17) to the elders that He has placed over His church. This formative discipline is part of the holy walk that God has commanded for each true believer. God readily supplies His grace to those who are submissive and obedient to Him and He resists those who proudly resist His leadership (I Peter 5:5; James 4:6). Part of His work is both formative and corrective discipline within His church.

### **Section 2. Corrective Discipline**

*Paragraph 1. General Statement.* When a member of GCC fails in an area of formative discipline it may be necessary for the elders and this church body to apply corrective discipline as instructed by God in His Word.

*Paragraph 2.* All corrective discipline will be considered and exercised within the elders when necessary and the elders will determine whether a matter is to be brought before the church body for action.

*Paragraph 3.* Members in the early churches were subject to confrontation for reasons such as:

- 1) Unwillingness to become reconciled to an offended brother (Matthew 18:15-17)
- 2) Unwillingness to engage in sufficient work (I Thessalonians 3:6-15)
- 3) Divisiveness in the church (Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:9-10)
- 4) Sexual immoralities or habitual covetousness, idolatry, reviling, drunkenness, or swindling (I Corinthians 5:1-13)

- 5) False Teaching (I Timothy 1:20; I Timothy 2:17-18). 6. General sinful conduct (Galatians 6:1).

*Paragraph 4.* Members of the church are expected to conduct their lives in accordance with Biblical standards of holiness as they grow to become more like Christ. When a member of the church ignores the teaching of Scripture he shall be dealt with according to the principles of discipline and restoration found in such passages as Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1-2; I Thessalonians 3:6-15; I Corinthians 5:1-13; Matthew 7:1-5.

*Paragraph 5.* Inactivity/Inappropriate Absenteeism. In being a part of a local body of believers, it is the responsibility of each member to be faithful in attendance and participation in the meetings and ministries of the congregation unless hindered by illness or other providential circumstances. To be lax or indifferent toward faithful participation may indicate the need for admonition concerning one's faithfulness to the local church (see Article V, Section 5A). It is the responsibility of the elders to oversee the regularity of participation and to examine possible reasons for inactivity. If inactivity is consistent without adequate reason, the elders and the overall congregation shall exercise every reasonable effort to reclaim to this fellowship those who, for one reason or another, have absented themselves from the fellowship of the congregation. In seeking to restore a member, every reasonable effort must be made to resolve any conflict, correct any error, or remove any offense. This will be done through Biblical counsel, admonition and with loving concern. If there is not appropriate response from the individual then the individual may be removed from membership.

*Paragraph 6.* Withdrawal of Fellowship. When a member continues to ignore the commands or prohibitions of Scripture in daily walk or teaching so that his/her life and/or erroneous teaching continues to hinder the peace of the church or its testimony, the elders may recommend the withdrawal of fellowship and/or termination of membership of the offending member. This shall be done following the guidelines given in Matthew 18:17-18; I Corinthians 5:3-5, 13; and I Thessalonians 3:6-15. One so cut off from the fellowship of the church shall be treated as a non-member until he/she gives evidence of true repentance.

*Paragraph 7.* When a member's actions lead to the regrettable obligation of terminating that person from membership, there will be a unanimous agreement of the elders as stipulated in Article VII, Quorum. The elders will exercise their judgment and so communicate the decision to the congregation.

### **Section 3. Restoration to Church Membership**

The goal of all discipline is a holy walk under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and obedience to His Word. The right to exclude persons or the withdrawal of fellowship is in harmony with the teachings of the Bible and is balanced by the call to restore such persons who have given satisfactory evidence of repentance (II Corinthians 2:6-11). When a person gives such evidence, the elders shall notify the congregation that the person has been restored to full fellowship.

**Article Nine**  
**Financial Accountability**

The elders and any others appointed by the elders will make up the primary body for financial accountability. They will oversee the counting of offerings and receive a regular report from the church treasurer.

**Article Ten**  
**Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year will be January 1 through December 31.

**Article Eleven**  
**Property Rights**

No elder, trustee, deacon, or any other church member, has any individual right to any part of the property of the church. On the other hand, no member of the church or any administrative committee will be held responsible for the corporate obligations of the church.

**Article Twelve**  
**Bylaws and Amendments**

The elders shall draft and seek to amend this Constitution and Bylaws as necessary.

- 1) No bylaw in violation of the Scriptures or of the terms of this Constitution shall be valid.
- 2) Notice of any proposed amendment must be made in writing at least thirty days prior to the date of the affirmation of the voting membership. During that period, any member may express his/her conviction concerning the proposed amendment by submitting a written statement to the elders for consideration.
- 3) Any amendments to this Constitution must be based upon the unanimous recommendation of the elders and the affirmation of the voting membership.

July 15, 2005  
Kevin Jarrard, Scott Kay, Rob Murphy, Ray Rhodes Jr.  
Elders of Grace Community Church

*Revised: June 15, 2014*  
Kevin Jarrard, Ray Rhodes  
Elders of Grace Community Church

*Affirmed: June 15, 2014* by the gathered congregation of Grace Community Church of North Georgia.

