



BY-LAWS

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Grace Church
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whoisgrace.com

ARTICLE 1. MEMBERSHIP

A. REQUIREMENTS – Individuals aspiring to become members of Grace Church may do so by following these procedures:

1. **Completion of the designated class(es) for membership** – Periodically membership classes shall be offered to provide teaching on the basic beliefs and structures of the Church.
2. **Signed Statement of Membership Commitment** – This statement shall be used as an instrument to affirm one's desire for membership, to serve as a formal record of one's membership, and to act as a statement of commitment to one's duties as a member. This commitment will include but is not limited to the following membership requirements:
 - a. Each new member will have entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - b. Each new member will be baptized by immersion as a believer.
 - c. Each new member will participate according to the responsibilities of membership in Article 1B.
 - d. Each new member will live a lifestyle in keeping with the Statement of Faith of Grace Church.
3. **Personal Interview** – Following attendance of the designated class(es) for membership, the individual desiring membership shall be personally interviewed by an individual(s) of the Church staff and/or Elders. Topics covered in this interview will include: the candidate's experience of salvation in Christ and regeneration, the candidate's understanding and acceptance of the faith and practices of the Church, the candidate's understanding of the expected commitment in time, talents, and treasure to Grace Church.
 - a. **Special Cases** – The Elder Team may interview and recommend membership without completion of the designated class(es) for membership in special cases, such as restoration of membership.
4. **Presentation** – Upon a successful interview process and approval by the Elders the candidates shall be presented to the Congregation as new members at any weekend worship service.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP

1. **Participation** – Every member of Grace Church is expected to:
 - a. Participate regularly in corporate worship.
 - b. Live in community (involvement in group life).
 - c. Invest in and invite others (outreach).
 - d. Volunteer their time (involvement in ministry).
 - e. Equip themselves (pursue God through personal spiritual growth).
 - f. Give regularly to the ministry at Grace Church – working toward the tithe and beyond.
 - g. Attend its business meetings.
2. **Expectations** – Every member of Grace Church is expected to:
 - a. Support the Church leadership (Pastors, Staff, Elders) through prayer.

- b. Submit to the scriptural authority of those chosen for leadership of Grace Church.
- c. Support the Statement of Faith and decisions of Grace Church. Every member has the right of private opinion, but he or she shall not have the right to engage in secret or open propaganda, nor to directly disturb the peace or interrupt the work of this Church.
- d. Preserve the unity of Grace Church. If at any time they find their opposition to the direction of the Church keeps them from engaging in full fellowship, they shall meet with a member of the Church leadership to discuss the problem. If there is still an impasse, they shall not disrupt the Church's fellowship, but shall quietly withdraw from its membership.

3. Limitations

- a. Members of Grace Church have no property rights and upon termination of membership shall be entitled to no interest in the assets.
- b. No one holding office at Grace Church, or being a member of any organization within the Church, shall be personally or individually liable for any error or mistake, act or omission, for or on behalf of the Church, occurring within the scope of their official authority, or in line with their duty as one holding such position, except for their own willful misconduct or violation of the law.

C. DISCIPLINE – All members of Grace Church are subject to its discipline.

1. **Purpose** – Discipline is the exercise of the authority given the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and to promote its purity and welfare. The purpose of discipline in this Church shall be to restore the erring member to fellowship and to maintain the purity of the body.
2. **Misconduct** – Members who bring reproach to Christ and His Church by persisting in conduct unbecoming to a Christian shall be admonished, counseled and invited into a process of restoration by Church leadership. If this discipline process fails to restore the offenders, they shall be subject to dismissal from membership by a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote of all the Elders. This action will be communicated to the membership at the appropriate Grace Church location(s). Once this process of discipline has begun on account of misconduct, Grace Church will not accept resignation of their membership until the process is complete.
3. **Grievances** – In all cases of grievances between members, the offenders shall be dealt with in accordance with the process outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. No public charges shall be made until such reconciliation has been attempted. Charges, when made, shall be written and submitted to the Elders for further action and possible recommendation to the Church.

D. TERMINATION – Membership at Grace Church may be terminated by:

1. **Death of the member.**
2. **Dismissal** – Disciplinary action may result in dismissal in the manner described above in Section C on discipline.
3. **Removal**
 - a. **Transfer** – Whenever members join another Church, their membership at Grace Church automatically terminates.
 - b. **Request** – Members, upon their own request, may have their name removed from membership.
 - c. **Non-Residency** – Permanent, non-resident members shall be removed from membership. Exceptions may be made by action of the Elders upon request.

- d. **Non-Participation** – Members who have stopped participating in the life of the Church according to their membership responsibilities, unless physically unable, shall be contacted to determine their desire to continue their membership. If they fail to respond within six (6) weeks, their names will be removed from membership.
4. **Restoration** of membership may be given as a special case in the membership process.

ARTICLE 2. CHURCH STRUCTURE

A. CORE VALUES

1. **Accessible Biblical Truth:** We value the Bible and won't "pull punches" or "water it down." At the same time, we strive to make the Scriptures clear and applicable for real life.
2. **Authentic Relationships:** We won't just put on our "Sunday best" and pretend everything is okay. We create environments where it's safe to share stories of struggle, triumph, sadness, doubt and hope.
3. **Spiritual Vitality:** Our gatherings are marked by spiritual energy and passion. We're fueled by our desire to continually take next steps in our relationship with Jesus.
4. **All In:** God created us with unique skills to do ministry. We strongly believe that everyone at Grace Church is here for a reason. The Church doesn't function well unless we're all involved.
5. **Outward Focus:** The stakes are high. Our hearts will beat fast, our hands will be busy and our wallets will be open for those who are far from God.

B. CONGREGATIONAL AUTHORITY

The authority of this Church is vested in the body of believers who compose its membership, and is executed through its duly elected officers and its duly convened congregational business meetings. Authority in the following matters is reserved for the Congregation assembled in a duly convened business meeting.

1. Calling of the Lead Pastor.
2. Electing lay Elders and other elected leaders.
3. Amending the constitution.
4. Modification or establishment of denominational affiliation.
5. Any matter on which the Church, in a duly convened congregational business meeting, shall choose to exercise its authority.

C. MEETINGS AND FISCAL YEAR

1. Annual Celebration

- a. The Annual Celebration is a business meeting of the Church and shall be held in September for the purpose of annual reports, election to offices, and other pertinent business. A compilation of appropriate written reports and the annual budget shall be made available to Church members at least one (1) week prior to the meeting.

2. Special Business Meetings

- a. Special business meetings of the Church may be held at any time by call of the Elders or a signed petition by at least 5% of the Church membership.
- b. For all Special Business Meetings, announcement shall be made by letter to all Church members, specifying the purpose(s) of the meeting and agenda items for consideration, at least one (1) week in advance.

3. Quorum

- a. In the case of Church business meetings, constitutional matters, calling of the Lead Pastor, or other business so designated by the Elders, a quorum shall consist of one-fifth (1/5) of the Church membership.

4. Voting

- a. All members who are actively participating in the Church will be eligible to vote on Church business.
- b. Motions may be approved by an affirmative vote of a majority of qualified members present and voting, with the exception of matters requiring at least a three-fourths (3/4) majority, as designated by the Church's constitution, these by-laws, or the Elder Team.
- c. Absentee ballots are not permissible.

5. Fiscal Year

- a. The fiscal year of the Church shall be from September 1 through August 31.

6. Meeting Order

- a. The most recent version of Robert's Rules of Order shall be used by the Church Chairman or his designate at all business meetings of the Church.
- b. The agenda for Church business meetings shall be set by the Elder Team. Petitions for agenda items must be submitted to the Elder Team for approval at least 30 days prior to the business meeting.

ARTICLE 3. CHURCH LEADERSHIP

A. STRUCTURE:

- 1. Elder Team**
- 2. Lead Team**
- 3. Central Team**
- 4. Site Leads**

B. ELECTED LEADERS AND OFFICERS

1. General Principles for Elected Leaders

- a. The elected leaders of this Church shall be lay Elders, Elder Chairman, Church Chairman, Church Treasurer, and other such officers as the existing Church leadership determines necessary.
- b. Elected leaders shall be called to office by vote of the membership of the Church at a business meeting. They shall have been a Church member in good standing for a minimum of one (1) year prior to election.
- c. All elected leaders shall be fully supportive of the Church with their time and talents, and should be giving proportionately with tithing as the norm.
- d. The character qualities set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9 and I Peter 5:1-4 should be evident in the lives of elected leaders, along with a genuine striving toward more mature fulfillment of them.
- e. Each elected leader must be in agreement with Grace Church's Statement of Faith.

2. Elder Team

- a. **Scriptural Qualifications** – Elders shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9 and I Peter 5:1-4.
- b. **Other Qualifications**
 - i. He must be a male member of the Church who has reached an appropriate level of spiritual maturity and is fulfilling the responsibilities of membership.
 - ii. He must ordinarily have served in some other ministry of the Church.
 - iii. He must have a sincere spiritual desire for the office.
 - iv. Church staff at a level of Central Team or above may not be elected as a lay Elder. Immediate family members of paid Church staff – spouses, children, siblings, and parents, including those by marriage – may be elected to the Elder Team but may not participate in conversations and decisions regarding personnel matters involving their family member.
- c. **Composition and Calling** – The Elder Team shall be composed of at least seven (7) men (including the Lead Pastor and at least six (6) elected others), with the number of Elders at any time determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men in the Church. The lay Elders may also appoint other members of the qualified Church staff as fully functioning Elders. Paid Church staff serving as elders shall abstain from voting on matters having a direct impact on any Church Staff, including but not limited to matters of employment, compensation or benefits. The number of staff representatives on the Elder Team may never exceed the number of elected Elders. One of those appointed shall always be the Staff Lead.
- d. **Term**
 - i. Elected Elders shall be called by the membership of the Church to a term of two (2) years.
 - ii. Elected Elders shall serve for no more than the equivalent of three (3) consecutive, two-year (2-year) terms.
 - iii. An Elder may be appointed to an additional one-year (1-year) term (7th year) in cases where a lack of qualified candidates or a circumstance in the life of the Church requires Elder continuity.
 - iv. After serving until the term limit, an elected Elder must remain out of office for a minimum of one (1) year before being qualified again for election as an Elder.
 - v. Appointed Elders shall be called to a term of one (1) year.
- e. **Scriptural Responsibilities** – The Elders are responsible for governing the Church, teaching the Word and tending the flock of God in this Church. In addition, they are to devote themselves to prayer and the Word.
 - i. Pray for and protect the body from all forces that would come against the Gospel.
 - ii. Provide oversight and wise counsel to advance the mission and vision of Grace Church.
 - iii. Shepherd the body through member care, guidance, discipline and restoration.
 - iv. Model the Great Commission individually, and model healthy teamwork collectively.
- f. **Major responsibilities include but are not limited to:**
 - i. Examining prospective candidates for the Lead Pastor and the Staff Lead.

- ii. Overseeing the teaching ministries of the Church and correcting error.
 - iii. Overseeing the formulation of all major Church policies and initiatives and ensuring that the purposes of the Church are being carried out with effectiveness and excellence.
 - iv. Being involved in major Church staff decisions and approving all Church staff salaries annually.
 - v. Conducting semi-annual reviews and annual compensation recommendations for the Lead Pastor and the Staff Lead.
 - vi. Overseeing legal and financial matters of the Church including approving the annual Church budget, acquisition of debt, and the purchase, lease or sale of real estate.
 - vii. Mediating in the event of a scriptural dispute – the Elder Team is the sole authoritative interpreter of Scripture for the Church.
- g. **Organization** – The Elder Team shall organize itself however it determines to be most effective in achieving the mission of the Church. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function.
- i. A Chairman of the Elder Team will be elected bi-annually by the Congregation who shall also be the Vice-Chairman of the Church.
 - ii. A Chairman of the Church will be elected bi-annually by the Congregation who shall also be the Vice-Chairman of the Elder Team.
 - iii. The term of office for each Chairman shall be for two (2) years at which time he may be nominated for re-election by the Elders or another Chairman may be nominated.
 - iv. Other roles for Elders may be appointed as necessary.
 - v. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the Elders.
 - vi. Permanent minutes shall be maintained, excluding confidential matters.
 - vii. All Elder Team meetings, with the exception of matters of confidentiality, are open for observation by any member of the Congregation, and minutes are available to members upon request.

3. Special Officers

- a. **Church Chairman** – He shall be the elected Vice-Chairman of the Elders. The duties of this office shall be to preside at all business meetings.
- b. **Church Treasurer** – The duties of this office shall be to oversee the management of the Church finances to ensure good stewardship and responsible financial oversight. A full job description will be provided.

4. Election to and Removal From Office

- a. **Nomination to the Church**
 - i. When an opening in an elected position exists, the Elders should solicit nominations for potential candidates. Potential candidates should be considered based on spiritual gifts and passions and a desire for the office.
 - ii. If a candidate agrees to accept the position, his or her name will be included on the ballot at the next business meeting of the Church.

b. Election by the Church

- i. Election shall be by a three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) majority of those present and voting.
- ii. Elections will take place at the Annual Celebration. Vacancies may be filled at any duly convened congregational business meeting.

c. Assumption of Office

- i. The term of office for those elected at the Annual Celebration shall commence immediately following the election and shall be terminated at the Annual Celebration of the year completing the designated length of term.
- ii. The term of office for those elected to complete an unexpired term shall commence immediately with election and shall be terminated at the Annual Celebration of the year that would have completed the designated length of term for the original office holder.

d. Leave of Absence

- i. A leave of absence from an elected position may be requested for personal reasons.
- ii. The leave of absence must be requested in a letter to the Elder Team.
- iii. A maximum length of six (6) months may be requested. If a longer period is needed, a letter of resignation should be submitted.
- iv. No adjustment to the length of term shall be made for a leave of absence.

e. Resignation

- i. An Elder may resign at any time through written notice to the Elder Team.
- ii. The resignation is effective when the notice is delivered unless the notice specifies a later effective date.

f. Removal from Office

- i. Reasons for removal from office in the Church may include ceasing to be a member in good standing, failure to attend without reasonable cause three (3) consecutive regular meetings related to his or her office, refusal to carry out assigned duties of his or her office, or conduct impairing his or her effectiveness or testimony.
- ii. The removal is effective with a minimum of three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) vote of the elected Elders, excluding the Elder under consideration, and must be communicated to the members of Grace Church.

C. CHURCH STAFF

Salaried staff and employees may be hired to carry out the necessary work of the Church by senior staff leadership under the oversight of the Elder Team. All employees are subject to the terms and conditions of employment as defined in the Employee Handbook, which is available to all employees of Grace Church. Any additional conditions are described below.

1. LEAD PASTOR

- a. **Definition** – The Lead Pastor shall be recognized as the spiritual leader of the Church and the “first among equals” in the Elders.
- b. **Position Summary** – The Lead Pastor must lead the Church in its mission towards reaching people for Christ and towards the spiritual maturity of the Church in extending

the Kingdom of God. His primary functions are to preach and teach the Word, provide the basic vision and leadership for the Church, and oversee the staff.

- c. **Scriptural Qualifications** – The Lead Pastor shall essentially meet the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. He shall possess the spiritual gifts of pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11) and leadership (Romans 12:8).
- d. **Other Qualifications**
 - i. Must be a born-again, male Christian with evidence of maturing faith.
 - ii. Must be an ordained minister or willing to be.
 - iii. Must be able to build teams and make ministers of others.
 - iv. Must possess a seminary degree or its equivalent in training and/or experience.
 - v. Must subscribe without reservation to the Statement of Faith as contained in the Church Constitution.
 - vi. Must be sympathetic and cooperative with the affiliations of this Church.
 - vii. Must have a definite sense of calling to the ministry of this Church and the community where the Church has a presence.
- e. **Scriptural Responsibilities**
 - i. His primary responsibility shall be exercising the gift of pastor-teaching (Ephesians 4:11).
 - ii. He shall equip the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12)
 - iii. He shall preach the Word of God, having full freedom of the pulpit under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, being ready in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting the flock with great patience and instruction (II Timothy 4:2).
 - iv. He shall oversee the administering of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 28:19; I Corinthians 11:23-26).
 - v. He shall counsel and comfort the flock, using God's Word (II Corinthians 1:3-4).
 - vi. He shall lead the Elders by instruction and example in the fulfillment of their scriptural responsibilities.
- f. **Ministry and Other Responsibilities** – The Lead Pastor's ministry expectations and other responsibilities shall be set forth in a written job description with Elder oversight.
- g. **Establishment of Relationship**
 - i. **Selection**
 - (a) The Lay Elders shall initiate the search process by exploring all reasonable options in conjunction with designated members of the Lead Team.
 - (b) If an external search is deemed necessary, the Lay Elders shall form a Pastoral Search Team consisting of appropriate members of the staff, at least one (1) non-staff member of the Elder Team, and at least three (3) at-large members of the Congregation.
 - (c) The Pastoral Search Team shall prayerfully and carefully examine potential candidates with respect to spiritual maturity, personal character, ministerial record, spiritual gifts and abilities. The Lay Elders must approve of the candidate before the process moves forward to the candidating weekend.

- (d) When agreement has been reached by the Pastoral Search Team, any external candidates shall be invited to visit the Church for a candidating weekend. This weekend should include preaching or ministering in other ways required to evaluate their gifts and abilities and be interviewed by the Staff, Elders, and any other appropriate designated group. Expenses incurred shall be covered by the Church. The Lay Elders will evaluate the candidate based on the input from those involved in the interview process and present a recommendation to the Church.
- (e) Any additional meetings that are deemed beneficial may be utilized for further evaluation of the candidate.

ii. **Extension of a Call**

- (a) The Lay Elders will formulate the terms of the call with assistance from any necessary staff members.
- (b) The recommendation of the Lay Elders concerning the extension of a call to the candidate to fill the vacant Lead Pastor position shall be presented to the Church at a special business meeting.
- (c) A quorum shall consist of one-fifth ($\frac{1}{5}$) of the Church membership eligible to vote. An affirmative vote of three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the qualified members present and voting is necessary to extend the call. Only one (1) candidate shall be presented to the Church at a given time. The vote shall be by closed ballot.
- (d) When a call has been approved, the candidate shall be notified verbally and in writing by the Elder Team. The candidate's written acceptance of the call shall establish the pastoral relationship as of the date agreed on by the Church and the candidate.

iii. **Working Relationship Between the Lead Pastor and Grace Church**

- (a) The Pastor's salary and benefits shall be fixed at the time of the call.
- (b) Any proposed employee changes within the first 12 months of the Lead Pastor's start date shall be approved by the Lay Elders.
- (c) The compensation package shall be reviewed annually by the Lay Elders at the time of preparation of the annual budget. Adjustments should be made based on criteria such as median salary range, cost of living, job performance and budget availability.
- (d) A performance review based on the Pastor's annual goals and written job description shall be conducted annually by the Lay Elders.
- (e) The term of office for the Lead Pastor shall be considered indefinite unless stated otherwise in his call.

h. **SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

i. **Resignation of the Lead Pastor**

- (a) When the Lead Pastor resigns, his letter of resignation shall be submitted to the Elder Team. Acceptance by the Lay Elders shall constitute the irrevocable dissolution of relationship as of the date to be agreed upon with the Lead Pastor.
- (b) A letter shall be sent to the Congregation from the Lay Elders, within an agreed upon time frame, explaining the circumstances of the resignation.

(c) If, in the judgment of the Lay Elders, the continuance of the Pastor's ministry should be undesirable, the relationship may be discontinued immediately, but the salary and benefits shall be continued for a minimum of thirty (30) days.

- ii. **Termination** – If the Lead Pastor violates the Church's personal conduct requirements or has ceased to be effective in his current position, his employment may be terminated. This process of termination shall be executed by the Lay Elders. Termination shall be effective as of the time notice is given. Terms and conditions of the severance package will be determined by the Lay Elders.

2. LICENSING OF PASTORAL STAFF

- a. **Licensing of Pastors** is a form of certification that the local Church has the power to confer on an un-ordained pastor until they are ordained. This gives the pastor the rights to perform the duties of the ministry, such as weddings and funerals, and the governmental privileges and rights including qualification for a housing allowance through the IRS.
- b. **Steps in Licensing Procedure**
 - i. The candidate makes his or her desire for licensure known to the Elder Team.
 - ii. The Elder Team interviews the candidate to determine his or her eligibility for licensing.
 - iii. Upon favorable recommendation of the Elder Team and affirmative vote at a business meeting of the congregation, a pastoral license is granted to the candidate.
- c. **Eligibility Considerations**
 - i. Recognition of God's call to a full-time responsibility to serve the Lord as a pastor.
 - ii. Recognition of candidate's conversion, call and spiritual convictions.
 - iii. Affirmation of the candidate's giftedness and ability to perform the duties of public leadership and the Gospel ministry.
 - iv. Affirmation of candidate's ability to reflect and represent the vision, mission and values of Grace Church.
 - v. Confidence in the candidate's qualification for responsibilities such as wedding ceremonies, funeral services, serving as a chaplain, etc.

ARTICLE 4. MARRIAGE & SEXUALITY STATEMENT

A. Christian Love

1. We believe that every person should be afforded Christian love, compassion, kindness, respect and dignity, regardless of their sexual orientation, lifestyle or beliefs.
2. Our example is Christ's love. Jesus was radically inclusive, but His was a transformational inclusiveness. He loved people while also enabling them to overcome their sinful behaviors.
3. Christian love involves both grace and truth. Sometimes the most loving thing to do is to correct and admonish when a person's lifestyle falls outside the boundaries of biblical teaching.

B. Biblical Marriage

1. We believe, based on the timeless teaching and authority of the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments, that **"biblical marriage" is an institution ordained by God which joins one**

man and one woman in a single, exclusive, life-long union, as delineated in Scripture (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5-6).

2. We believe that marriage is defined biblically and theologically rather than by man-made terms, and further that Grace Church intentionally adheres to the biblical standards for marriage and that other legal definitions and court actions are secondary to the biblical mandate.
3. A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the Church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of biblical marriage found in these by-laws.

C. Biblical Sexuality

1. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between one man and one woman who are married to each other, and that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, incest, pedophilia, pornography or adult transgender behavior, is sinful and outside of God's perfect design.

D. Weddings and Facility Use

1. As a result of these above described religious beliefs, we affirm that all marriage ceremonies performed in the name of Grace Church and any related celebrations or activities allowed in its facilities shall be for unions that meet the standards named in these Church by-laws. Also, no pastor, Church staff, or Church member shall officiate at any ceremony that is not in keeping with this statement of biblical marriage and sexuality adopted in these by-laws.
2. Anyone officiating marriage ceremonies at any Grace Church location, whether or not employed by the Church, shall affirm their agreement with this statement of marriage and sexuality adopted in these by-laws and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with them.
3. Any facility use request may be denied by a staff member or an Elder for any reason.

E. Elders and Staff

1. We believe that to uphold the integrity of the body of Christ and to provide a biblical role model to the Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the Church in any capacity or who serve as volunteer staff shall abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.

F. Restoration

1. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.