

The Grace Baptist
Church
Constitution

Revised & Annotated



GBC Publishing
Columbus, Georgia



THE GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH CONSTITUTION
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THE GRACE BAPTIST

Church Constitution

REVISED & ANNOTATED[†]

Preamble

SO THAT THINGS MAY BE DONE DECENTLY AND IN ORDER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ACCEPTED TENETS OF OTHER CHURCHES OF LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH, AND SO THAT WE MAY MORE READILY HELP EACH OTHER IN OUR CHRISTIAN SERVICE, WE DECLARE AND ESTABLISH THIS CONSTITUTION TO WHICH WE VOLUNTARILY SUBMIT OURSELVES.

[†] Text enclosed in boxes throughout this document consists of commentary to aid the reader's understanding and is not constitutional in authority.

Article I

Name and Purpose

Section 1 - Name:

This congregation of believers shall be known as the:

Grace Baptist Church, Inc.

Section 2 - Purpose:

(A) This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law) including, but not limited to: the establishing and maintaining of religious worship; the building maintaining and operating of churches, parsonages, schools, chapels, radio stations, television stations, rescue missions, print shops, day-care centers, camps, nursing homes, and cemeteries; and any other ministries that the church may be led of God to establish.

(B) The Church shall also ordain and license men to the Gospel ministry; evangelize the unsaved by the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; maintain and operate a bus ministry; educate believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture, both in Sunday and weekday schools of Christian education; maintain missionary activities in the United States and any foreign country; and engage in any other ministry that the Church may decide, from time to time, to pursue in obedience to the will of God.

Article II

Statement of Faith & Covenant

Section 1 - Statement of Faith:

(A) The Holy Scriptures

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally and plenary inspired Word of God¹. The Scriptures are inerrant, infallible² and God-breathed, and therefore are the final authority for faith and life. The sixty-six (66) books of the Old and New Testaments are the complete and divine revelation of God to Man. The Scriptures shall be interpreted according to their normal grammatical-historical meaning³. The King James Version of the Bible shall be the official and only translation used by the Church (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:20-21).

(B) Dispensationalism

We believe that the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations or rules of life which define man's responsibilities in successive ages. These dis-

¹ *verbally* means “word for word”; *plenary* means “completely”; the phrase *inspired Word of God* means that the Bible was “breathed by God”.

² *inerrant* means “without error”; *infallible* means “incapable of error or corruption”.

³ *normal grammatical-historical meaning* simply means that when we interpret the Bible, we believe it to mean just what it says in light of the historical background in which it was written *unless the text itself indicates otherwise*. Any symbolism, type or allegory that we find in the Bible is understood to *enhance* rather than *replace* its literal meaning.

Why the King James Bible?

While recognizing the limitations of any translation, we exclusively endorse the Authorized or King James Version. Some of the reasons for this are:

Its language dignifies the Gospel. Virtually every other translation promotes itself on the basis of its *inferior* reading level as a concession to the declining academic standards of the last half century. Even critics of the KJV universally concede its superlative linguistic quality. We feel that the high tone of its language is consistent with the superior standards it sets in every area of life.

Its perspective is orthodox. The KJV was translated prior to the influence of a number of morally devastating philosophies that have spread apostasy through institutions that were once doctrinally sound. We question the integrity of versions which now include contributions from translators who deny some of the most precious tenets of our faith. We are disturbed by a variety of compromised doctrines that we recognize in many of these works.

Its underlying text is reliable. Almost every other version of the Bible is translated from an abbreviated New Testament Greek text. Consequently, such works frequently omit or question the reliability of phrases, verses or entire passages. While we doubt that such omissions improve the accuracy of the Bible, we feel certain that they do not strengthen the faith of believers.

It has "proven itself". More sinners have mourned, more saints been comforted, more servants equipped and more souls have been saved by the influence of the KJV than by any other version in the history of the world. It has shaped the character of nations, the creed of denominations and the destiny of multitudes. Its words have inspired the greatest hymns and sparked the greatest revivals of the Modern Age, and it is still read, memorized and cherished by more believers than any other version in print.

pensations are not always of salvation, but rather are divinely ordered stewardships by which God directs man according to His purpose. Three of these dispensations¹—the age of law, the age of the Church, and the age of the Kingdom—are the subjects of detailed revelation in Scripture (Genesis 1:28; I Corinthians 9:17; II Corinthians 3:9-18; Galatians 3:13-25; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2-10; Colossians 1:24-27; Revelation 20:2-6).

(C) The Godhead

We believe in one Triune God, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14; John 14:10, 26).

(D) The Person and Work of Christ

(1) We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-2, 14; II Corinthians 5:19-21; Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-8).

(2) We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vi-

¹ The remaining dispensations are:
the **age of innocence** (in the Garden of Eden),
the **age of conscience** (before the Flood),
the **age of human government** (after the Flood) and the **age of promise** (during the times of the Patriarchs).

carious¹, substitutionary sacrifice; and that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:18-36; Romans 3:24-25; Ephesians 1:7; I Peter 1:3-5; 2:24).

(3) We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate² (Acts 1:9-10; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; Romans 8:34; I John 2:1-2).

(E) The Person & Work of the Holy Spirit

(1) We believe that the Holy Spirit is a Person and that He is the supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them unto the day of redemption (John 16:8-11; Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 12:12-14; II Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13-14).

(2) We believe that He is the Divine Teacher Who assists believers to understand and appropriate the Scriptures; and that it is the privilege and duty of all the saved to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 1:17-18; 5:18; I John 2:20, 27).

(3) We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowal of spiritual gifts to every believer. God uniquely uses evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip believers in the assembly so they can do the work of the ministry (Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:4-11, 28; Ephesians 4:7-12).

¹ *vicarious* means “performed in place of or on behalf of another”.

² An *advocate* is a legal defender in a court of law.

(4) We believe that the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and the gift of healing, were temporary. We believe that speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit and that ultimate deliverance of the body from sickness and death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection, though God frequently chooses to answer the prayers of believers for physical healing (I Corinthians 1:22; 13:18; 14:21-22).

(F) The Total Depravity of Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the human race fell; inherited a sinful nature and became alienated from God; and that man is totally depraved, and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:22-23; 5:12; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-19).

(G) Salvation

We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; I Peter 1:18-19).

(H) The Eternal Security and Assurance of Believers

(1) We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1, 38-39; I Corinthians 1:4-8; I Peter 1:4-5).

(2) We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the

assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God’s Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an “occasion to the flesh” (Romans 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11-15).

(I) The Church

(1) We believe that the local church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is made up solely of born again persons (I Corinthians 12:12-14; II Corinthians 11:2 and Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-27).

(2) We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:27;20:17, 28-32; I Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-11).

(3) We believe in the autonomy¹ of the local church free of any external authority or control (Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Romans 16:1, 4; I Corinthians 3:9, 16; 5:4-7; I Peter 5:1-4).

(4) We recognize water baptism and the Lord’s Supper as the Scriptural ordinances of obedience for the Church in this age (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; 18:18; I Corinthians 11:23-26).

(J) Separation

We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord; and that

¹ *autonomy* means the “ability to self-govern”; i.e. there is no supervisor between the Pastor and Jesus Christ Himself.

What Are Standards?

Standards are external evidences of spiritual maturity upon which minimum qualifications for levels of responsibility within the church are based. For example, the very first steps in spiritual maturity are salvation and a willingness to follow the LORD and fellowship with His people. One may give outward evidence of such an inner work by making a public profession of his faith, submitting to baptism and expressing a desire to join a local church. Meeting these standards entitles one to the most basic level of church responsibility of all—membership.

Standards for further responsibility require evidence of further maturity. As a Christian grows in his knowledge of the Scripture and becomes increasingly responsive to the Spirit's application of it's teachings to his life, his attitudes, speech and life style give outward evidence of the changes taking place in his heart. As carnal habits, worldly appetites and unwholesome entertainments are forsaken; as Christian service, spiritual devotion and a deepening insight into the things of God are displayed in his life, the believer becomes increasingly effective as a witness to the world and an example to the Body of Christ.

It is important to understand that it is spiritual maturity within which produces standards of conduct without, not the other way around. Mere conformity to a standard that is not rooted in spiritual conviction may yield certain practical benefits, but is no guarantee of true holiness within the heart. Misusing ones standards in an attempt to compare ones spirituality to that of other Christians is naïve, Pharisaical and unwise (II Corinthians 10:12).

As no sinner becomes a saint by assuming the trappings of Christianity, no believer is necessarily mature because of all the activities that he may or may not do. *However*, in the same way that a sinner responds to the Spirit's conviction, becomes a Christian, and sees his life transformed, so the saint who responds to the Spirit's leading will give increasing evidence of the growth taking place within him.

separation from all religious apostasy¹, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations is commanded of God (Romans 12:1-2; 14:13; II Corinthians 6:14-17; II Timothy 3:1-5; I John 2:15-17; II John 9-11).

(K) The Second Advent of Christ

We believe in that *Blessed Hope*, the personal, imminent² return of Christ, Who will rapture His Church prior to the seven-year tribulation period. At the end of the tribulation, Christ will personally and visibly return with His saints to establish His earthly Messianic Kingdom, which was promised to the Nation of Israel (Psalm 89:3-4; Daniel 2:31-45; Zechariah 14:4-11; I Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; Revelation 3:10; 19:11-16; 20:1-6).

(L) The Eternal State

(1) We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men; the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46; John 5:28-29; 11:25-26; Revelation 20:5-6, 12-13).

(2) We believe that the souls of the redeemed are, at death, “absent from the body and present with the Lord”, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection when spirit, soul, and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord (Luke 23:43; II Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 3:21; I Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 20:4-6).

¹ *apostasy* means departing from a truth that was once held.

² The *imminent* coming of Christ implies that no signs remain to be fulfilled for Him to return.

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

(M) The Personality of Satan

We believe that Satan is a person, the author of sin and the cause of the Fall of Man; that he is the open and declared enemy of man; and that he shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire (Job 1:6-7; Isaiah 14:12-17; Matthew 4:2-11; 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

(N) Creation

We believe that God created the universe in six literal, 24-hour periods. We reject evolution, the Gap Theory¹, the Day-Age Theory², and Theistic Evolution³ as unscriptural theories of origin (Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11).

¹ *Gap Theory*—the view that a “gap” of time is implied between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2 during which evolution may have occurred.

² *Day-Age Theory*—the view that the “days” of Creation were not literal 24-hour periods, but evolutionary ages of time.

³ *Theistic Evolution*—the view that God used evolution as a natural means of Creation rather than miraculously creating the world in six days.

(O) Civil Government

We believe that God has ordained and created all authority consisting of three basic institutions: 1) the home, 2) the Church, and 3) the state. Every person is subject to these authorities, but all (including the authorities themselves) are answerable to God and governed by His Word. God has given each institution specific Biblical responsibilities and balanced those responsibilities with the understanding that no institution has the right to infringe upon the other. The home, the Church, and the state are equal and sovereign in their respective Biblically assigned spheres of responsibility under God (Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:22-24; Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 2:13-14).

(P) Human Sexuality

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity should be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex (Genesis 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; I Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; I Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).

(Q) Divorce and Remarriage

We believe that God hates divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Divorce and remarriage is regarded as adultery, except on the grounds of fornication. Although divorced or divorced and remarried persons or their spouses may hold positions of service in the Church and be greatly used of God for

Christian service, they may not be considered for the offices of pastor or deacon (Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 19:3-12; Romans 7:1-3; I Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).

(R) Abortion

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the mental well-being of the mother are acceptable (Job 3:16; Psalm 51:5; 139:14-16; Isaiah 44:24; 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44).

(S) Missions

We believe that God has given the Church a Great Commission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations so that there might be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic group, and language group who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ, we must use all available means to go to the foreign nations and not wait for them to come to us (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 5:20).

(T) Lawsuits Between Believers

We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the Church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the Church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do be-

lieve, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander (I Corinthians 6:1-8; Ephesians 4:31-32).

(U) Giving

We believe that every Christian, as a steward of that portion of God's wealth entrusted to him, is obligated to support his local church financially. We believe that God has established the tithe as a basis for giving, but that every Christian should also give other offerings sacrificially and cheerfully to the support of the Church, the relief of those in need, and the spread of the Gospel. We believe that a Christian relinquishes all rights to direct the use of the tithe¹ once the gift has been made (Genesis 14:20; Proverbs 3:9-10; Acts 4:34-37; I Corinthians 16:2; II Corinthians 9:6-7; Galatians 6:6; Ephesians 4:28; I Timothy 5:17-18; I John 3:17).

Section 2 - Authority of Statement of Faith:

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teachings of the Bible and, therefore, is binding upon all members.

Section 3 - Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and on profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of our Father and of the Son and

¹ The *tithe* is a one-tenth portion of one's income.

What is Christian Liberty?

Christian liberty is the freedom that God gives to His children to make decisions in areas not specifically addressed in the Bible. In contrast to the Pharisees who added a highly complex system of regulations to the laws of the Old Testament, the disciples of Christ were free to follow the leading of God's Spirit and the principles of God's Word in matters of conscience.

There are two extremes of misuse in regard to liberty of which the saint must beware. Some believers abuse the concept of "liberty" to justify unwholesome behavior or deeds which influence others to stumble in their daily walk. Such a Christian fails to sincerely follow the principles of the Bible and demonstrates his misunderstanding of how the Spirit leads in the life of a saint. It is license rather than liberty that leads one to disobey the clear teachings of Scripture or place a stumbling block before the weak.

Other Christians may readily forsake or adopt those activities that they feel convicted of, but then reason that others who do not similarly respond must not be equally attuned to spiritual matters. Such a Christian fails to recognize that all saints do not begin their pilgrimage at the same starting line, nor are all cumbered with the same burdens, nor do all have the same opportunities to grow. He may insist that others adopt his standards to show themselves his spiritual equals. He may look down upon those who refuse as moral inferiors. Fearing the same attitudes from others whose standards he perceives to surpass his, he may try to outwardly conform his life to theirs whether he understands their conduct or not. And he may suppose that all of this reveals superior spirituality on his part.

The mature saint will never claim that his liberty in Christ allows him to disobey the law of Christ. He will humbly seek to know God's leading for himself and will graciously suppose that his fellow believers are doing the same. He will measure his spirituality against the life of the Lord alone. He will give his brethren credit for responding to the light that God has given them, and will understand that the direction they are traveling is more important than the distance they have gone. He will not allow his liberty to place either a stumbling block at another's feet nor a burden upon another's back, but rather in love he will allow the Spirit of Christ to mold him into an example of the believers (II.1.H.2).

of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, the angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to 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 also engage to maintain family and private devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred, acquaintances, and all others; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from fornication and all immorality; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy of speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and, mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure reconciliation without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, 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.

Article III

Membership

Section 1 - Qualifications for Membership:

Upon a vocal assent of the members present at any church service or meeting, membership shall be extended to all who have had and whose lives evidence a genuine experience of regeneration through faith in and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior; who renounce sin; who endeavor to live a consecrated life wholly unto the Lord; who fully subscribe to the Statement of Faith contained herein; and who enter into the Church covenant contained herein; and upon compliance with any one of the following conditions:

- (A) By requesting membership following baptism (immersion) as a true believer in Christ Jesus as personal Savior;

- (B) By letter of transfer from another Bible-believing church of like faith and practice, or other written statement of good standing from the prior church if the applicant has been baptized by immersion subsequent to a profession of faith;

- (C) By testimony of faith, having been baptized by immersion; or

- (D) By restoration, if having been removed from membership, upon majority vote of the congregation after confession is made publicly before the Church membership of the sin or sins involved, and satisfactorily evidencing repentance to the Pastor (or the Board of Deacons if the office of Pastor is vacant).

Church Membership

Membership at Grace Baptist Church is contingent upon a) evidence of salvation in one's life (III.1), and b) baptism (III.1.A) or testimony of baptism (III.1.C) or letter of transfer and assurance of baptism (III.1.B) or majority vote for restoration of a previously disciplined member (III.1.D), regardless of "race, color, or national or ethnic origin" (X.4). Applications for membership may be subject to review by the Board of Deacons if so desired by the Pastor (V.2.A).

Members are expected to adhere to the Church's Statement of Faith (II.2) and to live according to the spirit of the Church Covenant; pray for and submit to the authority of the Pastor in the Church; support the Church financially and to live according to the Bible (III.2).

Members are not entitled to any material benefits from the Church (III.3; X.1). Church benefits are primarily for the education and edification of members (VII.2). Members may vote to ratify and confirm or reject the decisions of the Church leadership (III.3).

Members who deviate from the Church Covenant or Statement of Faith in either faith or practice are subject to the Church's disciplinary efforts to restore that member in a spirit of love (III.4). Members may not contact unrepentant members who have been removed from the Church membership unless the removed member is a family member or the contact is for the purpose of restoring the removed member (III.4.G). Members are expected to resolve all disputes between one another within the Church (II.2.T).

Members in good standing may transfer their membership by letter to another church (III.5) subject to the approval of the Pastor (III.6.B). No member can simultaneously be a member of another Church (III.6.A).

Only members (or in certain cases, those who anticipate becoming members) may hold a Church office or position (IV.3.D; VII.3).

Members of the Church or its missions may be ordained to the Gospel ministry (IX.1).

Section 2 - Duties of a Member:

On becoming a member of this Church, in addition to the covenant in Article II, Section 3, each one further covenants to love, honor, and esteem the Pastor; to pray for him; and to recognize his authority in spiritual affairs of the Church; to cherish a brotherly love for all members of the Church; to support the Church in prayer, tithes, offerings and with other financial support as the Lord enables; and in accordance with Biblical commands to support, through a life-style walk, affirmation of the beliefs and practices of the Church.

Section 3 - Privileges of a Member:

This congregation functions not as a pure democracy, but as a body under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the direction of the Pastor as the undershepherd with the counsel of the Board of Deacons. Membership in this church does not afford those individuals with any property, contract, or civil rights based on principles of democratic government. Determination of the internal affairs of this Church are ecclesiastical matters and shall be determined exclusively by the Church's own rules and procedures. The Pastor shall oversee and/or conduct all aspects of this Church. The Board of Deacons shall give counsel and assistance to the Pastor as requested by him. Members may not vote to initiate any Church action, but rather the vote of a member is to confirm and ratify or reject the direction of the Church as determined by the Pastor.

Votes and Elections

Members must be 18 years or older to vote for officers or on matters requiring more than a simple majority, involving the sale or purchase of property or the disciplining of another member (Bylaw 1).

The Pastor is elected by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of members who are present and voting at a meeting called by the Pulpit Committee “at any regular Church meeting of the Church at least two weeks in advance” (VI.3.A).

Removal of a Pastor is decided by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority at a “regular or special Church administrative meeting” if announced “from the pulpit...two Sundays prior” (IV.4.A).

A two-thirds majority of the members may vote to revise or amend the Constitution if the change is given “in writing and announced from the pulpit” two weeks in advance (XII).

Deacons are elected (IV.1) each December (IV.5.A) by a vote of the Church members for a term of one year (IV.4.B).

A simple majority of members may vote to confirm the hiring of associate and assistant pastors (IV.6.A), elect officers (IV.5.A), confirm the establishing of new offices (IV.1), expel unrepentant members (III.4.E), restore disciplined members (III.1.D), set guidelines for expenditures not otherwise authorized (VIII), or dissolve the corporation (V.2.C.3).

Members may not initiate referendums (III.3).

Members of the Board of Deacons may vote to elect from their own number a chairman, a vice-chairman and a secretary immediately after the annual Church Conference in January (V.2.B).

Members of the Pulpit Committee must vote to approve a pastoral candidate before the Church can vote to call him as pastor (IV.5.B).

Section 4 - Discipline of a Member:

(A) There shall be a Discipline Committee consisting of the Pastor and the Board of Deacons. These men shall have sole authority in determining heretical deviations from the Statement of Faith and violations of the Church Covenant. If the Pastor or a deacon

is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the Discipline Committee. He shall be entitled to the same steps as other Church members and be subject to the same discipline.

(B) Members are expected to demonstrate special loyalty and concern for one another. When a member becomes aware of an offense of such magnitude that it hinders spiritual growth and testimony, he is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother. Before he goes, he should first examine himself. When he goes, he should go with a spirit of humility and have the goal of restoration.

(C) If reconciliation is not reached, a second member (either a deacon or the Pastor) is to accompany the one seeking to resolve the matter. This second step is also to be preceded by self-examination and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration.

(D) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections (B) and (C) have been taken, the Discipline Committee, as the Church representatives Biblically responsible for putting down murmuring, shall hear the matter. If the matter is not resolved during the hearing before the Discipline Committee, the Committee shall recommend to the members of the Church that they, after self-examination, make an effort to personally go to the offending member and seek that member's restoration.

(E) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections (B), (C) and (D) have been taken, such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the membership of the Church upon a majority vote of the membership present at the meeting called for the purpose of considering disciplinary action.

Committees

The Constitution gives the Pastor authority to create and appoint members to “various committees” (V.1.B). The only exceptions to this are the Discipline Committee and the Pulpit Committee.

The Discipline Committee is a standing committee (III.4.A), but is only activated to redress a “public offense” or a private matter in which previous attempts to correct the matter have failed (III.4.F). It “consist(s) of the Pastor and the Board of Deacons” except for a pastor or deacon who is himself “the subject of a disciplinary matter” (III.4.A).

The Discipline Committee’s function is to resolve matters of heresy against the Church’s Statement of Faith and misconduct against the Church Covenant (III.4.A). If the Discipline Committee is unable to resolve the matter at a hearing, it has authority to publicly recommend that the Church seek the offender’s restoration (III.4.D). If all attempts at restoration have failed, the committee may call for a meeting of the Church to vote upon the removal of the offender from the Church membership (III.4.E).

The Pulpit Committee is a temporary committee consisting of the chairman and vice-chairman of the Board of Deacons, two additional deacons, the senior Church staff member, and two members selected by the deacons from the membership at large. Their function is to review and approve or disapprove of pastoral candidates to present for the Church to vote upon (IV.5.B). They have the authority to call for the election of a Pastor “at any regular Church meeting...[announced] at least two weeks in advance” (VI.3.A). They are “responsible for the tallying of the votes of the Church” at such a meeting (IV.5.C).

(F) No matter may be heard by the Discipline Committee or the Church unless the steps outline in subsections (B) and (C) have been taken, except in the case of a public offense.

(G) If an unrepentant offending party is removed from Church

membership, all contact with him from that point forward must be for the sake of restoration (except family members).

Section 5 - Transfer of Membership:

Members not under the disciplining process of Section 4 may request that letters of transfer be sent to another church.

Section 6 - Termination of Membership:

(A) No member of this Church may hold membership in another church. If any member unites in membership with another church, that person is automatically terminated without notice from membership in this Church.

(B) A member may resign at any time, but no letter of transfer or written statement of good standing will be issued upon such resignation, except at the discretion of the Pastor.

Article IV

Officers

Section 1 - Church Officers:

The elected Church officers are the Pastor (*see Article V, Section 1*) and deacons (*see Article V, Section 2*). The appointed church officers are the minister of records (*see Article V, Section 3*), minister of finance (*see Article V, Section 4*), minister of Sunday School (*see Article V, Section 5*), and minister of hospitality (*see Article V, Section 6*). One person may hold two or more offices, except that of Pastor. The Pastor, from time to time as he deems appropriate, may appoint other Church officers. Any new office that he creates shall be subject to a confirmation vote of the Church membership.

Section 2 - Designation of Corporate Officers:

The Corporate Officers

In addition to its primary organization as a spiritual body, Grace Baptist Church is also a legally incorporated entity under the laws of the State of Georgia. The purpose of this is “as an accommodation” to the church’s functioning in legal and financial relationships with institutions outside of the church (I.2.A and IV.2). In this legal capacity, the church has four Corporate Officers and a Board of Trustees.

The Corporate Officers are the “president of the corporation” which is the Pastor, the “vice president of the corporation” which is the chairman of the Board of Deacons, the “secretary of the corporation” which is the minister of records and the “treasurer of the corporation” which is the minister of finances (IV.2). The signatures of any two of these are required on legal documents (V.2.C).

The Board of Trustees of the corporation is made up of the Board of Deacons of the Church (V.2.C). The Trustees have the authority to acquire (V.2.C.1) or sell property, borrow or pay off indebtedness (V.2.C.2), or provide for the dissolution of the Church upon the majority “vote of the Church membership” (V.2.C.3).

(A) As an accommodation to legal relationships outside the Church, the Pastor shall serve as president of the corporation; the minister of records shall serve as secretary of the corporation; the minister of finances shall serve as treasurer of the corporation; and the chairman of the Board of Deacons shall serve as vice president of the corporation.

(B) In the event of the vacancy of the pastoral office or the incapacity of the Pastor, the vice-president of the corporation shall be responsible to see that the duties of the pastoral office are fulfilled unless the performance of such duties are otherwise provided for elsewhere in this Constitution.

Section 3- Eligibility For Continuance In Office:

(A) The Pastor and all deacons shall meet the qualifications as outlined in the Scriptures (I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:7-9).

(B) All Church officers shall affirm their agreement with the Statement of Faith (as set forth in Article II) annually in the presence of each other.

(C) All Church officers must be approved initially, and thereafter annually, by the Pastor in order for them to commence or continue in their offices.

(D) Only Church members are eligible for election or appointment to any Church office or position, except for the office of Pastor and for such staff members as he shall hire whose election or confirmation shall be contingent upon the condition that they shall join the Church upon assuming their duties.

(E) The Pastor of this Church shall be an Independent Baptist not

affiliated with any denominational organization or association.

(F) The Pastor and deacons of this Church shall not be members of any organization that is secret in nature or requires an oath of allegiance to the organization or membership, including, but not limited to, organizations such as the Masonic Lodge.

Section 4 - Term of Office:

The term of office shall be as follows:

(A) The relationship between the Pastor and the Church shall be permanent unless dissolved at the option of either party by the giving of a month's notice, or less by mutual consent. The severance of the relationship between the Pastor and the Church may be considered at any regular or special Church administration meeting, provided notice to that effect shall have been given from the pulpit to the Church two Sundays prior to said Church administration meeting. A three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required to decide the matter. Disciplinary removal of the Pastor from office automatically terminates his membership. A restoration to membership after disciplinary removal will be subject to the requirements of Article III, Section 4.

(B) The term of service for all other elected offices and positions in the Church, shall be for one year, at the expiration of which they may be re-elected.

(C) A vacancy occurring in any office or board, except in the case of the Pastor, may be filled at any regular or special Church administration meeting.

What Is An Independent Baptist?

An Independent Baptist is a member of a Baptist church which is unaffiliated with any denominational convention. As such, Independent Baptists comprise a somewhat informal denomination. They recognize no human hierarchy outside of the individual local church. Such churches may choose to fellowship with, support, or act in concert with one another, but this is strictly voluntary. They are accountable to no synod, diocese, denominational secretary or other human agency. In matters of conscience and conduct, the pastor of the church answers to God and to his congregation alone.

In matters of faith and practice, Independent Baptists are almost indistinguishable from other Baptist denominations. Because of their absolute autonomy, individual churches may vary on some issues. By and large, however, Independent Baptists tend to be conservative in theology, traditional in standards of conduct, and aggressive in evangelistic outreach.

Why would one choose to be an Independent Baptist? Over the last century, as various conventions began to tolerate increasing degrees of liberalism in their institutions and worldliness in their conduct, a growing number of conservative-minded individuals and churches began to “go independent” as a matter of conscience. Independents cite several factors which recommend separation from denominational ties, such as:

The precedent of Scripture. The New Testament provides no denominational hierarchy to succeed the authority of the apostles. Each pastor was directly responsible to God alone.

Separation from an “unequal yoke”. Many conscientious Christians are reluctant to contribute their time, talents or tithes to denominational programs that support or tolerate apostate doctrine or worldly conduct. Independent churches are free to give eclectic support to those institutions and individuals in which they have unreserved confidence.

Protection from apostate influence. Independents are concerned over the adverse influence that churches can exert over one another when they are bound by denominational ties. Associations tend to gravitate toward the standards of least resistance among their members. It is the principle of leaven. In an association, one apostate congregation can wield a disproportionate influence upon the rest.

Reliance upon God rather than man. Independents recognize the human tendency to rely on organizational security. Without criticizing those who seek refuge in manmade networks of support, there is within the Independent mentality a desire to see God “move man by faith through prayer alone”.

tive offices until their successors are duly installed.

Section 5 - Election of Officers:

(A) The annual election of officers by the Church membership shall occur during the month of December.

(B) The calling and election of a new Pastor shall be subject to the approval of a Pulpit Committee, which shall consist of seven (7) members and shall include the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board of Deacons, two other deacons voted upon by the Board of Deacons, the senior staff member, and two men from the active membership of the Church, who shall be nominated and elected by the Board of Deacons. The Pulpit Committee may con-

Church Officers

The elected church officers are the Pastor and the deacons. The appointed church officers are the minister of records, the minister of finance, the minister of Sunday School, and the minister of hospitality. In addition to these officers, the Pastor has “sole authority” (IV.6.B) to appoint “other Church officers” (IV.1), or to hire associates and assistants with “the approval of the Church” (IV.6.A).

All ordained officers must meet Scriptural qualifications (IV.3.A). All officers must agree to the Church’s Statement of Faith (IV.3.B) and be members of Grace Baptist Church (IV.3.D). An officer negligent in his duties for three months may be replaced by Pastoral appointment (V.8.B). The Pastor must be an Independent Baptist (IV.3.E), must approve all other officers (IV.3.C), must, along with the deacons, be unaffiliated with any secret organization such as the Masonic Lodge (IV.3.F) and must not be divorced (II.1.Q).

Vacancies for any office except that of Pastor “may be filled at any regular Church administration meeting” (IV.4.C).

sider and make inquiries regarding many candidates, but the Committee shall either approve or disapprove of each candidate individually by vote after thorough review by the Committee, which shall include, but not be limited to, meeting with the Pastoral candidate, questioning the candidate, hearing the preaching of the candidate in various church services in person, by tape-recorded messages, or by any other means; and considering the candidate's leadership abilities, administrative abilities and views regarding the various ministries of the church. Upon approval of the Pulpit Committee, the approved candidate shall be presented for vote by the Church. Upon disapproval of a candidate by either the Pulpit Committee or the Church at large, the Pastoral candidate shall not be reconsidered.

(C) The calling and election of a new Pastor by the Church shall be voted upon by secret ballot. A three-fourths majority of the members who are eligible to vote who are present and voting shall be required. No absentee ballots shall be accepted. The Pulpit Committee shall be responsible for the tallying of the votes of the Church.

Section 6 - Pastoral Oversight of Officers and Staff:

(A) Subject to the approval of the Church membership and on the condition that they shall become members of the Church upon assuming their duties, the Pastor may hire other officers, associates and assistants to assist him in carrying out his God-given responsibilities. This provision does not include the hiring of faculty and staff members of Grace Christian School whose employment shall be subject solely to the discretion of the Pastor and school

administrator.

(B) All Church staff, whether paid or volunteer, shall be under the supervision of the Pastor, who has the sole authority to hire, appoint, or dismiss the same.

The Pastor and His Associates

A Pastoral Candidate must be recommended to the Church by the Pulpit Committee (IV.5.B). To become Pastor, a recommended candidate must be elected in a secret ballot by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of members which are at least 18 years old and present (IV.5.C). The election of a Pastor may be held at any regular meeting announced two weeks in advance (VI.3.A).

The Pastor may resign with one month's advance notice, "or less by mutual consent", or be removed from office by a three-fourths majority vote at any Church administration meeting if notice to this effect has been given to him one month in advance, "or less by mutual consent", and the vote has been announced two Sundays in advance. Such removal terminates his Church membership (IV.4.C).

The Pastor is the president of the corporation (V.1.B). His duties are to "preach the Gospel regularly"; administer the Church ordinances; moderate all Church meetings in which "Church matters" are transacted; "supervise the teaching ministries"; "tenderly watch over" the spiritual interests of the Church membership (V.1.A); appoint Committee members; publicly brief newly elected officers on their offices; welcome new members; and "perform such other duties as generally appertain to such a position"; and he may perform these duties by whatever "means and methods" he sees fit (V.1.B). He must be an Independent Baptist (IV.3.E), be unaffiliated with any secret organization such as the Masonic Lodge (IV.3.F) and must not be divorced (II.1.Q).

Associate or assistant Pastors are hired by the Pastor (IV.6.B) and confirmed by the congregation (IV.6.A). They "assist the Pastor in carrying out the ministries of the Church" under his "direction and guidance" (V.7).

Article V

Duties of Officers

Section 1 - The Pastor:

(A) The Pastor shall preach the Gospel regularly and shall be at liberty to preach the whole counsel of the Word of God as the Lord leads him. He shall administer the ordinances of the Church, act as moderator at all Church meetings for the transaction of Church matters, supervise the teaching ministries of the Church, and tenderly watch over the spiritual interests of the Church membership.

(B) The Pastor shall appoint the members of the various committees. He shall serve as the president of the corporation. He shall publicly inform all newly-elected officers of the particular function and responsibilities of their respective offices. He shall extend the right hand of fellowship to all new members on behalf of the Church and perform such other duties as generally appertain to such a position. The pastor shall be free to choose the means and methods by which he exercises the ministry that God has given him.

Section 2 - The Board of Deacons:

(A) The Board of Deacons shall assist the Pastor, in such a manner as he shall request, in promoting the spiritual welfare of the Church, in conducting the religious services, and in performing all other work of the Church. They shall make provision for the observance of the ordinances of the Church. They shall, if requested by the Pastor, consider applications for Church membership.

They may, in cooperation with the Pastor, disburse the benevolence fund. They shall assist the Pastor in visitation and all other evangelistic efforts of the Church. They shall provide the pulpit supply and they or their appointees shall act as leaders for Church meetings if the office of the Pastor is vacant. The Board of Deacons shall assist the Pastor in caring for the administrative needs of the Church's various ministries as requested by the Pastor.

(B) Immediately following the annual Church administration meeting, the Board of Deacons shall assemble and elect, from their own number, a chairman, who shall be vice president of the corporation, a vice chairman, and a secretary.

The Board of Deacons

The deacons are the trustees of the corporation (V.2.C). They "assist the Pastor" in whatever way he asks in order to promote "the spiritual welfare" of the Church, conduct services and perform "all other work of the Church". They provide for the ordinances, may help the Pastor "disburse the benevolence fund", and assist in visitation and "other evangelistic efforts". If requested by the Pastor, they may consider applications for Church membership and help care for the Church's administrative needs. In the absence of the Pastor, they "provide the pulpit supply" and they or their appointees "act as leaders for Church meetings" (V.2.A).

All deacons are reelected annually (IV.4.B) in the month of December (IV.5.A).

"Immediately following" the first quarterly administrative meeting, they will meet to elect a chairman, who is vice-president of the corporation, a vice-chairman and a secretary (V.2.B).

A deacon must be unaffiliated with any secret organization such as the Masonic Lodge (IV.3.F) and must not be divorced (II.1.Q).

(C) The Board of Deacons shall constitute the Board of Trustees of the corporation. At least two of the four officers of the corporation, by joint signatures, shall be authorized to sign any legal document on behalf of the corporation. The Board of Trustees shall exercise only the following specific powers:

(1) to purchase, hold, lease, or otherwise acquire real and personal property on behalf of the Church, and to take real and personal property by will, gift, or bequest on behalf of the Church;

(2) to sell, convey, alienate, transfer, lease, assign, exchange, or otherwise dispose of, and to mortgage, pledge, or otherwise encumber the real and personal property of the Church; to borrow money and incur indebtedness for the purpose and the use of the Church; to cause to be executed, issued, and delivered for the indebtedness, in the name of the Church, promissory notes, bonds, debentures, or other evidence of indebtedness; and to secure repayment by deeds of trust, mortgages, or pledges.

(3) to exercise all powers necessary for the dissolution of the Church corporation, if such action is mandated by a vote of the Church membership.

Section 3 - The Minister of Records:

The minister of records shall keep a record of Church proceedings, of the membership roll, of all baptisms, of certificates of ordination, licenses and commissions as directed by the Church, and preserve all documents, papers, and letters coming into his hands during his term of office. All records are to be kept in the Church office and delivered to any successor upon leaving office. He

shall keep an account of any special events in the life of the Church which are of historical interest and shall give a report at the annual church administration meeting of the status of the Church membership roll for the past year. The minister of records shall also serve as the secretary of the corporation.

Section 4 - The Minister of Finance:

The minister of finance shall account for all funds contributed to the Church and shall disburse the same as ordered by the Church. He shall present a written report of itemized disbursements quarterly and make a general report for the year at the annual Church

The Appointed Officers

The four appointed “ministers” serve as the secretary (V.3), the treasurer (V.4), the Sunday School superintendent (V.5), and the head usher (V.6) of the Church.

The secretary of the Church records the “Church proceedings”, the membership roll, baptisms, certificates of ordination, licenses and commissions, and preserves “all documents, papers, and letters” which are kept in the Church office. He also records special events and gives an annual report on the membership roll at the annual Church Conference in January (V.3).

The treasurer of the Church accounts for Church funds and disburses them “as ordered by the Church”. He presents itemized, written quarterly reports and an annual report at the annual Church Conference. All disbursements, except petty cash, are made by check (V.4).

The Sunday School superintendent supervises the Sunday School, recommends teachers for the Pastor to appoint, presides at teachers’ meetings and reports on the Sunday School at the annual Conference (V.5).

The head usher, with the Pastor, appoints other ushers. He extends “the official hospitality of the Church to its members and visitors”.

administration meeting. All expenditures of the Church, except miscellaneous petty cash disbursements, shall be paid by check. The minister of finance shall also serve as the treasurer of the corporation.

Section 5 - The Minister of Sunday School:

The minister of Sunday School shall supervise the Sunday School. In consultation with the Pastor he shall recommend the appointment of the teachers of the Sunday School. He shall preside at the teachers' meetings, and report on the condition of the Sunday School at the annual Church administration meeting.

Section 6 - The Minister of Hospitality:

The minister of hospitality, in cooperation with the Pastor, shall appoint a sufficient number of assistants to care for the work of ushering and extending the official hospitality of the Church to its members and visitors.

Section 7 - Associate Pastors:

Under the direction and guidance of the Pastor, the associate pastors of the Church shall assist the Pastor in carrying out the ministries of the Church.

Section 8 - Duties of All Officers:

(A) All officers shall prepare a written report of their work for the annual Church administration meeting and shall surrender any

records in their possession to the minister of records at the close of their term of office to be filed as a permanent record of the work of the Church. All records are the property of the Church and must be kept in the Church office.

(B) Any officer who neglects his duties as outlined in the constitution for a period of three months may be removed from his office at the discretion of the Pastor and another may be appointed by the Pastor to serve the unexpired term.

Section 9 - Installation of Officers:

A public installation service in which all newly-elected officers of the Church are to be dedicated to their respective offices shall be held at a public Church service following their election at the annual Church administration meeting.

Article VI

Meetings

Section 1 - Meetings For Worship:

Unless otherwise determined by the Pastor, the Church shall meet each Sunday for public worship, both morning and evening, and at least once during the week for Bible study and prayer. Except when circumstances forbid it, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed in accordance with Scripture as a remembrance of the sacrificial death of our Savior.

Section 2 - Meetings For Church Administration:

Quarterly written Church Administration Reports shall be distributed during the months of January, April, July and October. In December the Church shall elect Church officers. All special meetings shall be announced in advance according to the notice required for special meetings.

Section 3 - Special Meetings:

(A) The Pastor (or deacons, if the office of Pastor is the subject of possible disciplinary action) may call a special meeting by giving notice of such a meeting and the purpose for which it is called to the Church from the pulpit at least one Sunday, and not less than one week, prior to said meeting. A meeting for election of a Pastor may be called by the Pulpit Committee at any regular Church meeting of the Church at least two weeks in advance.

Church Administration Meetings

Administration meetings, or “Church Conferences”, keep the membership informed on the status and direction of the church.

These meetings are held “during the months of January, April, July and October” (VI.2). They are moderated by the Pastor (V.1.A) unless his office is vacant, in which case they are led by the deacons or their appointees (V.2.A). They are to “be opened and closed with prayer for divine guidance and blessing” (Bylaw 2). During these meetings, “a written report of itemized disbursements” (V.4) is to be given by the minister of finances, also known as the church treasurer. A vacancy in any office or board, except that of Pastor, may also be filled at this meeting (IV.4.C). If prior notice has been given on two Sundays beforehand, the “severance of the relationship between the Pastor and the Church” may also be considered (IV.4.A). The “Constitution may be revised or amended” at this meeting if 14 days in advance a) the “revision or amendment has been submitted in writing” and b) notice has been given from the pulpit (XII).

The first quarterly Church administration meeting is the *annual* Church administration meeting. It is conducted as other quarterly meetings but with these additional activities:

A “written report” (V.8.A) is given by the minister of records on “the status of the Church membership roll for the past year” (V.3);

A “general report for the year” is given by the minister of finance on the “itemized disbursements” of the Church (V.4);

A “report on the condition of the Sunday School” is given by the minister of the Sunday School (V.5);

A “written report of their work” is given by “all officers” (V.8.A);

A “public installation service” is held for the dedication of “all newly-elected officers” and the ordination of “newly-elected deacons” (V.9).

Following the annual administration meeting, “the Board of Deacons shall assemble and elect, from their own number, a chairman, who shall be vice president of the corporation, a vice-chairman, and a secretary” (V.2.B).

Other special meetings may be called by the Pastor, or by the deacons in special circumstances, by announcing the meeting and its purpose from the pulpit “at least one Sunday, and not less than one week” in advance (VI.3.A).

(B) Bible conferences, missionary conferences, and revivals may be held as the Pastor deems beneficial.

(C) An impromptu emergency meeting may be called at the conclusion of any service if a majority of the congregation present, upon hearing the purpose of the meeting, agrees to conduct such a meeting.

Section 4 - Fiscal Year:

The fiscal year of the Church shall begin January 1st and end December 31st.

Article VII

Ministry of Education

Section 1 - Purpose:

The Church believes that it is to provide the members' children with an education which is based upon and consistent with Biblical teachings. The Church believes that the home and Church are responsible before God for providing a Christian education. To this end, the Church shall engage in ministries in education in keeping with the following dictates:

Section 2 - Church Participation:

All educational programs or courses of instruction formulated and offered by the Church shall be primarily for the benefit of the members of the Church; however, the Pastor may permit non-Church members to participate in Church educational programs or courses of instruction if he deems it in the best interest of the Church.

Section 3 - Staff Membership:

All instructors, teachers, and administrators shall be members of this Church. This provision shall not apply to visiting missionaries, evangelists, or preachers engaged for the purpose of delivering sermons, conducting revivals, or other special meetings on a temporary basis.

Section 4 - Statement of Faith Accord:

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be taught and presented in full accord with the Statement of Faith of the Church.

Section 5 - Unity:

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be conducted as an integral and inseparable ministry of the Church.

Section 6 - Teaching:

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be conducted consistent with the teaching of the inerrant Word of God. Any assertion or belief which conflicts with or questions a Bible truth is a pagan deception and distortion of the truth which will be disclaimed as false. It is the responsibility of every instructor or teacher to present the inerrant Word of God as the sole infallible source of knowledge and wisdom.

Section 7 - Christian Walk:

All administrators, instructors, and teachers shall continue or adopt a lifestyle consistent with the precepts which they teach, whether in or out of the classroom.

Article VIII

Unauthorized Expenditures

Any unauthorized expenditures shall fall under the guidelines set in polity by vote of the Church.

Contributions

The tithes, sacrificial offerings and “other financial support as the Lord enables” (III.2) of Christians are given for the support of the Church ministries (II.1.U) which include “the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations” (II.3). In giving the tithe, the Christian forfeits its control and entrusts its use to the discretion of the Church leadership (II.1.U).

The Christian may designate additional contributions to “various funds to accomplish specific goals” (XI) such as the Building Fund, the Mission Fund, etc. Funds so designated may be specifically applied according to the discretion of the church leadership, but they *will* be used toward the general purpose for which they were designated. Contributions designated for a purpose *not* endorsed by an established fund has no fiduciary protection, but may be used “for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Article I, Section 2.”

The Church treasurer, or minister of finance, is responsible to “account for all funds contributed to the Church”, to “disburse the same as ordered by the Church”, and to “present a written report of itemized disbursements” each quarter (V.4). All disbursements, except petty cash, are to be made by check.

The deacons may assist the Pastor in disbursing the benevolence fund (V.2).

Any expenditures not specifically authorized by the Constitution to another entity are subject to the vote of the Church membership (VIII).

Article IX

Ordination

Section 1 - Ordination Qualifications:

Any member of this Church or its mission churches who gives evidence of a genuine call of God into the work of the ministry and possesses the qualifications stated in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 may be ordained as a minister of the Gospel.

Section 2 - Ordination Procedure:

(A) After a conference with the Pastor and the Pastor's approval of the candidate for ordination, the Pastor shall call a council to examine and pass on the qualification of the candidate. The ordination council shall consist of ordained ministers of like faith invited to participate in the examination of the candidate.

(B) If the candidate is found worthy of the ordination by council, the ordination council may recommend the candidate to be ordained by the Church.

(C) The Pastor and the chairman of the deacons shall arrange for the ordination service.

Article X

Tax-Exempt Provisions

Section 1 - Private Inurement and Conflict of Interest:

(A) No part of the net earnings of the Church shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the Church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for the services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article I, Section 2 hereof.

(B) Trustees and other officers are to avoid any and all conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest exists when a Trustee or other officer of the Church benefits personally from his position as a Trustee or other officer in a manner which exceeds the benefit which would be realized by a third party in the same transaction. A Trustee or other officer may receive personal benefit from the Church when the transaction profits the Church and the benefit is not greater than what would have been received by an outside party.

Section 2 - Political Involvement:

No substantial part of the activities of the Church shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The Church shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

Section 3 - Dissolution:

Upon the dissolution of the Church, the Trustees shall, after paying and making provision for payment of all liabilities of the

Church, dispose of all the assets of the Church to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the Trustees shall determine. Assets may be distributed only to organizations which agree with the Church's Statement of Faith.

Section 4 - Racial Nondiscrimination:

The Church shall have a racially nondiscriminatory policy and therefore shall not discriminate against members, applicants, students, and others on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin.

Article XI

Designated Contributions

From time to time the Church, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. Contributors may suggest specific uses for their contributions, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the Pastor and the Board of Deacons. Except for contributions made to an established fund, no fiduciary obligation¹ shall be created by any designated contribution made to the Church other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Article I, Section 2.

¹ *fiduciary obligation* – “an obligation of trust”. This phrase means that the Church leadership is not bound by any sense of duty to use a contribution designated for any purpose not sanctioned by an established fund for the purpose for which it was designated, but may use it instead for “any of the purposes stated in Article I, Section 2” of this Constitution.

Article XII

Amendments

This Constitution may be revised or amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting, at any regular Church administration meeting, provided that said revision or amendment has been submitted in writing and announced from the pulpit fourteen (14) days before the vote is taken.

Adoption

This Constitution was adopted by a unanimous majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called meeting of the Church. This Constitution and Bylaws supersedes any other constitutions and/or bylaws of Grace Baptist Church, Inc.

October 18, 1995

Revision

This Constitution was revised by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called meeting of the Church. This revision supersedes any other constitutions and/or bylaws of Grace Baptist Church, Inc.

May 30, 2004

Church Bylaws

Number 1:

Each member of the Church shall be entitled to vote on all matters except those pertaining to the amending or revision of this Constitution, the disciplining of members, the purchase or sale of real property, the dismissal and calling of a Pastor, and the election or confirmation of officers, in which matters only members at least 18 years of age shall be entitled to vote.

Number 2:

All Church administration meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer for divine guidance and blessing.

Number 3:

All appointments for public worship and Bible study and the arrangements thereof, including time and place and the use of the property belonging to the Church for purposes other than the stated appointments, shall be under the control of the Pastor.

Number 4:

Unless otherwise specified in this Constitution, all decisions of the Church shall be decided by a simple majority vote.

Number 5:

All literature used in the Church shall be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith.

Number 6

A vote of the Church will not be necessary to grant a transfer of Letter of Membership for an active member or a member in good standing. Other members who request a letter of transfer will be advised by a written statement that their names are being deleted from our membership records.

Number 7

Any member elected or confirmed to an office of the church assumes responsibility for maintaining the reputation of Christ and of this congregation by conforming to the highest standards of deportment; such a member shall agree to submit to the church's standards of leadership which include abstinence from such activities as the sale or use of tobacco in any form, of illegal narcotic substances, or of intoxicating drink as a beverage, gambling, movie attendance, listening to rock music, worldly dancing, association with oath-bound secret societies and partnerships with unbelievers.

Appendix A

The Ministries of Grace

For over 60 years, Grace has expanded its ministries in three general areas: education, music and outreach. The following are a number of ministries that members of the church can be involved in.

Education

Weekly worship services—The church's primary education ministry is its regular Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday evening worship and Bible study.

Sunday School—Prior to the Sunday morning worship, the church conducts Sunday School classes for all ages.

Youth ministry—The church provides special programs specifically for junior and senior high school young people including camps, mission trips and regular social gatherings.

Master Club—The church hosts a special program on Wednesday evenings designed to train younger children to serve Christ using games, memory work and competitions.

Grace Christian School—The church operates a tuition based day school for grades K3—12 which offers the community a Bible based education in a wholesome environment.

Christian College Scholarships—The church and the school both offer scholarships to members and graduates who continue their education in Christian colleges of like faith.

GBC Publishing—The church publishes its own literature which is being used in a growing number of churches and colleges.

Church Bookstore—Instructional and inspirational literature, sermon tapes and CDs are available for a small cost through the church bookstore.

Music

Church Choir—Church members have the opportunity to learn and perform beautiful, Christ honoring music for the Sunday services and for special occasions in the church choir.

Teen Choir—Junior and Senior high school students learn to sing in public during the midweek Bible study on Wednesday evenings.

Church Orchestra—Members skilled with wind or string instruments enhance the services through the church orchestra.

School Band—Children learn to play instruments, read music and blend with others in the school band.

Patch the Pirate Club—Younger children learn to sing together and perform once a month in the “Patch” Club.

“Men of Grace”—Men with unusual musical talent have produced several quartet CDs which are circulating through a growing audience around the country.

Outreach

Visitation—The church makes contact with the community each Thursday night through its weekly visitation program.

Soul Winner's Club—The church trains and motivates members to share Christ with others through its quarterly Soul Winners Club.

Bus Ministry—Bus workers target children and others who depend on the church for transportation to its services.

Addictions Recovery—The Reformer's Unanimous program helps those struggling with addictions to overcome destructive bondages.

Rescue Mission Service—Each month church members conduct services for a local men's shelter.

Jail Service—Each month, men from the church conduct services at the local jail.

Nursing Home—Church members conduct weekly Sunday school services at a local nursing home.

Spanish Ministry—The church holds services in Spanish and translates the Sunday morning message for Spanish speaking people.

Military Ministry—Through a local missionary to the military, the church is able to deliver the gospel to scores, and sometimes hundreds, of soldiers every week.

Missions—Through weekly giving and the annual Missions Conference, members are able to support over 140 mission projects on every inhabited continent

Appendix B

The History of Grace

In 1946, the Jordan City Baptist Church, pastored by Rev. J. L. Reeves, was located on Talbotton Road on what is now an empty lot adjacent to Buck Ice & Coal Company. Mr. G. Gunby Jordan, owner of the cotton mill across the street, donated a plat of land to the church at 2915 14th Avenue. On June 23rd, 47 members disbanded the church, moved to the new location and incorporated as Grace Baptist Church under Rev. H. L. West.

After two years, pastor West resigned and was succeeded by Rev. J. E. Wilks, another original member, who served as interim pastor for the next eight months. Pastor V. A. Campbell was called in April, 1949, and served for over a year. On October 1, 1950, Rev. Jimmy C. Neaves became the church's pastor.

In 1952, Pastor Neaves led the church to build a new auditorium, now called Hodges Hall. Later that year, the church adopted its first official constitution. Pastor Neaves cut his own salary so that the church could begin supporting its first two missionaries at \$10 per month each. In February of 1956, the church purchased its first bus to bring in children from the community.

Pastor Neaves died unexpectedly, and on November 3, 1957, the church called Rev. Walter Lee Hodges as pastor. For the next 31 years, Pastor Hodges expanded the church's outreach through the bus ministry, missionary support, the founding of a Christian School, the establishing of sister churches in the community and the winning of souls.

On September 25, 1966, the church voted to dissolve its denominational ties and become independent.

By 1972, the church had outgrown its facility, and the current auditorium was built. Under Bro. Hodges' ministry, the Sunday

morning attendance grew to an average of 300 to 400.

In 1979, Pastor Hodges led the congregation to begin Grace Christian School. By August of that year, the new Education Building was finished, and the first year began with 65 students in grades 1 through 9 with Rev. Doug Hodges as the school's first principal.

In 1988, Pastor Hodges retired, and the church called Pastor David Price. The following year, the church named Pastor Hodges as Pastor Emeritus for life. After Bro. Hodges' death in 1992, Pastor Price established the Hodges Award to be given annually on Homecoming Sunday to honor Christian servants whose ministry and faithfulness were similar to that of Bro. Hodges. In February of 1990, Grace Baptist Church hosted its first annual Missions Conference.

The church's average attendance continued to grow to an average between 400 and 500 on Sunday mornings. In 1996, anticipating future expansion, 40 acres with 2 lakes were purchased off of Warm Springs Road near the northern edge of Muscogee County. The church is now preparing to relocate the church and school to this site.

In 1999, Pastor Price resigned, and the church called Pastor Jeffrey A. Amsbaugh. Under Dr. Amsbaugh's leadership, the Harvesters began as a program for mission minded young people in 2000, a Christian Servicemen's Center was established in 2001, the church began supporting its 100th missionary project in 2002; the Berrey scholarship was established in 2003; a Soul Winner's Club was formed in 2004, a Spanish ministry in 2005, an addictions recovery program in 2006, and in 2007, the church paid off all debt on the 40 acre campus where it plans to begin construction of a new facility in 2008.

Appendix C

The Future of Grace

Grace Baptist Church and Christian School anticipates relocating to its Midland campus by the year 2012. The additional space is expected to make a variety of new ministries possible. Some tentative elements of the church's future vision include:

Construction of a 600 seat sanctuary with allowance for a future balcony expansion;

Construction of an education building with room for classrooms and offices;

Construction of a fellowship hall with a lakeside view to host banquets and celebrations;

Construction of a lakeside retreat center to accommodate visiting guests and to host special events;

Development of a "nature walk" to provide an ambience for meditation and spiritual reflection;

Hosting of statewide and regional conferences, conventions and seminars;

Creation of a gymnasium and ball fields to host sporting events for the church and school;

Establishing an evening Bible institute for advanced Christian education and training;

Escalation of the church's composition and publication of curriculum and literature;

Composition and production of the church's own music and CDs;

Construction of a vehicle maintenance facility for shelter and storage of the church's fleet;

Conversion of the current inner city facility to an addictions recovery residency program.



Located to the northeast of Columbus at the corner of Lynch and Warm Springs Roads in Midland, the future site of Grace Baptist Church and Christian School covers about 40 acres in the path of the city's northward expansion.

THE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

Why have one? After all, isn't the Bible the only constitution a church really needs?

Ultimately, yes—the Bible is the church's final authority in all matters of faith and practice. If the Constitution is ever found to be in conflict with the Bible, God's Word inevitably overrules.

But the Bible is also a very big Book. And it deals with a much wider range of subjects than the operation of a church. A constitution sifts the items relative to church government into a single convenient document.

Also, Christians sometimes disagree about what the Bible teaches concerning the church. A constitution codifies a church's understanding of how the Bible says it should operate.

Finally, in addition to being a spiritual organization, the church must also interact with businesses and governments in this world. Therefore, as an accommodation to the larger community, the church is a legally incorporated institution. As such, it needs a constitution for the sake of legal and economic accountability.

In the end, however, the constitution is a human document and subject to error. Therefore, it provides for its own revision and amendment as corrections become necessary.

This constitution contains the latest revisions as well as explanatory notes to help the reader understand the content as well as the spirit behind the operation of Grace.



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