



# GRACE CHURCH

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# Bylaws

Approved February 2020  
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## **ARTICLE I: Preamble**

God has called his church into being for his glory and has given its ministry into human hands for fruitful development until Christ returns. Every congregation has the responsibility to organize itself under the authority of Scripture and thus in alignment with God's purposes for his church.

These by-laws are written to help Grace Church, Waco, Texas, conduct its affairs satisfactorily as a corporate entity in this state. They do not replace Scripture; they stand under Scripture. They cannot guarantee a fruitful church; they must be handled in a spirit of loving cooperation with one another. Unlike Scripture, this document can and will be amended. It is a practical instrument for responsible self-governance, to fulfill the requirement of the state, to satisfy our own consciences with due diligence, and to ensure a credible testimony to our generation, for the sake of the gospel. We pledge to abide by and to amend these by-laws according to Scripture and the laws of our state, for the greater glory of God.

## **ARTICLE II: Name and Purposes**

### **2.1 Name**

The name of the corporation and body is Grace Community Church of Central Texas, doing business as "Grace Church."

### **2.2 Incorporation**

Grace Church is a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the state of Texas and is organized under the Texas Business

Organization Code, as amended (the "Code"). Federal tax exemption is granted under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3).

### **2.3 Purposes**

The corporation is organized to operate exclusively for any charitable, religious, or educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) if the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 by engaging directly in support of such purposes or by making distributions to other organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. Without limiting or expanding the foregoing, the immediate specific purposes for which the corporation is organized are: 1) the public worship of God; 2) the teaching and preaching of the Word of God; 3) the fellowship of Christians; 4) the administration of the ordinances of the New Testament; 5) the assisting of young Christians in spiritual growth; 7) an active program of local and worldwide evangelism.

## **ARTICLE III: Affiliation**

Grace Church is an independent, autonomous church, not subject to the control of any other ecclesiastical body, but only to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church (Eph. 5:23). We also recognize the benefit of cooperation with other like-minded true gospel preaching churches. Grace Church then has the right to cooperate and associate with outside groups on a voluntary basis, per the direction of the elders. Insofar as it is practical, we will associate with, cooperate with, and support local Baptist associations, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention

(SBTC), the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT), the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and the Acts 29 Network (A29).

## **ARTICLE IV. Mission**

The mission of Grace Church is to glorify God by making Jesus known in our church, the city, and the world by making multiplying disciples of Christ.

## **ARTICLE V. Offices**

The Principal office for business transactions of Grace Church, hereinafter referred to as the “Church”, will be located at 4610 Bosque Boulevard, Waco, TX 76710. The Elders have full authority and power to move the principal office from one location to another and to establish other offices, campuses, sites, and locations or places where the church is qualified under applicable laws to conduct its business.

## **ARTICLE VI. Statement of Faith and Basis for Theological Beliefs**

### **6.1 Statement of Faith**

The Statement of Faith is a basic outline of Biblical doctrine that every member of Grace Church must be able to affirm. The Statement of Faith of Grace Church is as follows:

#### **THE SCRIPTURES**

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally

inspired Word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible, and God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matthew 5:18; John 16:12-13).

#### **THE GODHEAD**

We believe in one Triune God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—co-eternal in being, co-eternal in nature, co-equal in power and glory, having the same attributes and perfections, and that God possesses perfect knowledge of all things, past, present, and future, including all human thoughts, acts, and decisions. (Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

#### **THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST**

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 man (John 1:1-2, 14; Luke 1:35). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice, and that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Romans 3:24; 1 Peter 2:24; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:3-5). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry as Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate (Acts 1:9, 10; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2). We believe Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:5; Romans 14:9; 2 Timothy 4:1).

#### **THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY**

## **SPIRIT**

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; 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; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 12:12–14; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18).

## **THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MAN**

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

## **GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND MARRIAGE**

We believe that God created human beings in his image in two embodied sexual kinds—male and female (Genesis 1:26–27). We believe that God designed marriage to consist of a union between man and a woman, which is complementary, involving one of each sexual gender, exclusive, and permanent (Genesis 2:18, 24; Matthew 19:4–6; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Hebrews 13:4). Christian singleness is not a state of insufficiency but rather, like marriage, is a gift bestowed by God (1 Cor 7:7; Matthew 19:11).

## **SALVATION**

We believe salvation is by faith alone in Christ Jesus whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins, and that faith is a gift of God's free and sovereign grace which He gives according to His will. (Ephesians 2:8–10; John 1:12;

Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18–19).

## **ETERNAL SECURITY AND ASSURANCE OF BELIEVERS**

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; 1 Corinthians 1:4–8; 1 Peter 1:5). 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 clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for the flesh (Romans 13:13, 14; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11–15).

## **THE MINISTRY AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowing of spiritual gifts. It is, however, the believer's responsibility to operate in their sovereignly given spiritual gift(s). The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion and is the placing of the believer into the Body of Christ. We also believe that particular spiritual gift(s) are neither essential, nor prove the presence of the Holy Spirit, nor are an indication of deep spiritual experience (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11, 13; Ephesians 4:7–8). We believe that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith, in accordance with His own will, for the sick and afflicted (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14, 15). We believe that it is the privilege and responsibility of every believer to minister according to the gift(s) and grace of God that is given to him (Romans 12:1–8; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 Peter 4:10–11).

## **THE CHURCH**

We believe that the church, which is the body and espoused bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons, and that all Christians are commanded by

Scripture to take part in the regular teaching, fellowship, and accountability of a congregation of fellow disciples led by biblically qualified pastors organized as a Gospel Church (Hebrews 10:25, Ephesians 1:22, 23; 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 2 Corinthians 11:2). We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:27; 18:22; 20:17; 1 Timothy 3:1-3; Titus 1:5-11). We believe in the autonomy of the local churches, free of any external authority and control (Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Romans 16:1,4; 1 Corinthians 3:9, 16; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4). We believe baptism is a sign of our covenant relationship with God and is a part of our act of spiritual worship and Biblical obedience. We believe the Lord's Supper is a Scriptural means of testimony for the church meant to declare the life, death and resurrection of Jesus together. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:41, 42; Acts 16:31; Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

## **6.2 Core Values**

The Core Values of Grace Church reflect what distinguishes Grace Church from other churches who would affirm the basic doctrines. These distinctive values indelibly shape the way that Grace Church is led and the direction the church is headed.

### **BIBLICAL, HISTORIC, CHRISTIANITY**

Our goal as a congregation is not to be new and inventive, but to be rooted in the deep tradition of the Christian faith revealed in God's Word. We treasure the Scriptures as they reveal the glory of Triune God in the face of Jesus Christ; we worship through rhythms and liturgy that anchors us in

Christian tradition and saturates us with God's word; and we embrace the centrality of the gospel of God's grace in Christ preached by the apostles, defended by the early church, renewed by the Protestant Reformers, and carried forward by God's faithful people throughout time.

### **CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY**

Our community is a community of need, humbly dependent on God together in all of life. We aim to be marked by a desire for holiness, repentance, and confession of sin and to cultivate a culture where vanity and posturing are replaced by an eagerness to acknowledge our weakness and reliance on the person and work of Christ and rejoice in the assurance of gospel forgiveness. We are committed to building intergenerational and intercultural relationships that are centered on union with Christ, not first on personal preference or comfort. Following the "one-anothers" of the New Testament, we are growing into a spiritual family of joyful disciples that are always ready to drop everything for the sake of bearing one another's burdens.

### **KINGDOM-MULTIPLYING MISSION**

We grow outward, not upward. Jesus has commissioned us to make disciples of all nations, and we are committed to see the multiplication of Christ's kingdom, not addition to ours. The message we are witness to is the gospel: the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that calls all people to turn from sin, receive new life in Christ, and join him on mission. Before building our own church brand or expanding our influence, we value the hard work of planting churches who plant churches and commissioning one another as sent-out missionaries to renew the world and make

disciples in our homes, workplaces, city, and to the ends of the earth.

### **6.3 Statement on Marriage and Sexuality**

It is the biblical position that marriage involves the union of one man and one woman in permanent sacred fidelity. Though various cultures and customs have evolving definitions of marriage, it is God alone who has ultimate authority to prescribe and describe the marital relationship (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:1-9, Mark 10:1-12).

Furthermore, sexual intimacy is only properly exercised and pursued within the confines of this marital relationship. Sexual immorality, defined as any sexual activity outside of the boundaries of the sacred marital relationship between one man and one woman, is clearly and expressly prohibited by the Lord (Matthew 15:19, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 13:4).

As a consequence, Grace Church regards any and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or even lustful intent toward such, as sinful and ultimately unsatisfying. Moreover, Grace Church also regards as sinful the intent or desire to surgically alter one's biological sex to a different sex. Since the body is a creation of God, Grace Church holds sexual identity to be biologically determined, and any gender norms are to be observed according to clear biblical standards. Disagreement with one's biological sex only leads to spiritual confusion and emotional chaos (Genesis 1:27, Romans 1:26-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Though sinful sexual expression is egregious (as is all sin), the gospel provides redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 2:1-10, Titus 3:3-7).

Grace Church's Statement on Marriage and Sexuality does not provide grounds for bigotry, bullying or hate, as we fully believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity, regardless of his or her lifestyle. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated as sinful and are not in accordance with the Scriptures nor the doctrines of Grace Church.

The elders of Grace Church reserve the right and authority to prohibit church assets or property to be used in any manner that would be deemed inconsistent with this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality.

Grace Church's Statement on Marriage and Sexuality is based upon God's will for human life as conveyed to us through the Scriptures, upon which this Church has been founded and anchored, and shall not be subject to change through the prevailing opinion of the general public; influence of or interpretation by any government authority, agency, or official action; or legal developments on the local, state, or federal level.

*Statement derived from The Village Church in Flower Mound, Tx.*

## **6.4 Basis for Theological Beliefs**

The elders and members of Grace Church will look to the Bible as the recorded word of God and the only authoritative text upon which to base the Church's theological beliefs. The members of Grace Church will have voting authority on decisions to change the doctrinal statements of the church in any way. Changes to the statement of faith must be approved by a congregational vote of at least 80%, per 7.3.2 of these bylaws.

## **6.5 Teaching Positions**

These positions are not completely part of our statement of faith, and therefore total unity on them is not required for membership at Grace Church, but they represent what will be taught and practiced at Grace Church under the authority of our pastor/elders.

### **THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN SALVATION**

God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, not on the basis of foreseen faith but unconditionally, according to his sovereign good pleasure and will. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, God will draw the elect to faith in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, graciously and effectually overcoming their stubborn resistance to the gospel so that they will most assuredly and willingly believe. The elect of God whom he gave to the Son, will persevere in belief and godly behavior and be kept secure in their salvation by grace through faith. God's sovereignty in this salvation neither diminishes the responsibility of people to believe in Christ nor marginalizes the necessity and power of prayer and evangelism, but rather reinforces

and establishes them as the ordained means by which God accomplishes his ordained ends.

(John 1:12-13; 6:37-44; 10:25-30; Acts 13:48; 16:30-31; Romans 3:1-4:25; 8:1-17,31-39; 9:1-23; 10:8-10; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Titus 3:3-7; 1 John 1:7,9)

### **BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

Baptism is a biblically ordained act of obedience to Christ in which the church, through immersion in water, is meant to publicly affirm and portray a believer's union with Christ through faith and his or her commitment to Christ and his church.

The Lord's Supper is a biblically ordained act of obedience to Christ in which the church, through the regular taking of bread and wine, spiritually communes together with Christ in a covenant meal by remembering Christ's work and renewing their commitment to Christ and his church.

### **GENDER DISTINCTIONS**

God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life.

Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of



sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord.

In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role of pastor/elder within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

(Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15-25; Acts 2:17-18; 21:9; Romans 16:1-16; 1 Timothy 2:12—3:13; Galatians 3:23-29; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

### **MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

Marriage has been established by God as the first human institution. The Scriptures teach that a man should leave his father and mother, be united to his wife, and the two will become "one flesh." When this "one flesh" design has been violated and broken by marital unfaithfulness (extramarital sexual intercourse) or the abandonment/neglect/abuse of the Christian by the non-Christian spouse, reconciliation is the aim and repentance is necessary to achieve true reconciliation. Where there is

no repentance and possibility of reconciliation, divorce is allowable (but not mandated). Remarriage, consequently, is allowable (but not mandated) when it becomes evident that the "one flesh" relationship cannot be restored. Divorce and remarriage, when following these biblical guidelines, does not necessarily disqualify an individual from church membership and its privileges, including the offices of deacon and pastor/elder. Even when divorce and remarriage occur outside biblical boundaries, they are not unpardonable offenses but, because of the gospel, can and must be forgiven.

(Genesis 2:24; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:1-12; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 7:8-16)

## **ARTICLE VII. Membership**

### **7.1 Qualifications**

The congregation of this church shall be made up of all members of rolls at the church. To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration by living consistent to their profession of faith, who has been baptized by immersion in obedience to Christ following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Statement of Faith and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the church covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership in order to present them for admission before the members. In making

the determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or other such evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.

Those not under formal church discipline and living in faithfulness to their membership agreement are considered members in good standing. Affirming that children under the age of 18 can have a credible testimony of regeneration and ability and gifts to serve in the church, Grace Church desires to prepare them for the responsibilities of church membership and will work readily with their parents or authority to decide at what age it is appropriate for them to assume the full responsibilities of a member. In the event of ongoing, unrepentant sin, the members of the church will place the primary, but not ultimate, mantle of leadership in church discipline on the child's (under 18) parents, providing the child's parents are members of Grace Church.

## 7.2 Admission

Admission of membership at Grace Church requires the following steps:

- a. *Completion of membership class.* This class will be offered periodically in differing forms to instruct potential members in the purpose and responsibilities of membership, as well as the mission and doctrine of Grace Church.
- b. *Elder Interview.* Each membership candidate will be interviewed by an elder of Grace Church to assess the candidate's personal testimony, determine the integrity and validity of their faith, and discuss their desire to commit to Grace Church by signing the church covenant

- c. *Vote of Affirmation.* Members of Grace Church will vote to affirm and admit new member candidates by a congregational vote requiring a majority of 80% or higher.
- d. *Signing of church covenant.* Member candidates will sign the church covenant before the gathered congregation and be presented for public affirmation and prayer.

## 7.3 Responsibilities

Members of Grace Church are privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. It is the privilege and responsibility of each member to attend members meetings, to exercise voting privileges outlined in section 7.3.2 of these bylaws, and to abide by their commitment outlined in the membership covenant.

Members of Grace Church are entitled to and expected to exercise voting privileges and have the final authority on the following decisions by a majority vote of 80%:

- a. The affirmation of new individuals into the membership of Grace Church
- b. Removing existing members from the membership of Grace Church as a final step in formal church discipline (excommunication), as outlined in 7.4.1 of these bylaws.
- c. Confirmation of pastor/elders into Grace Church
- d. Making changes to the statement of faith, the constitution and bylaws, or the church covenant of Grace Church.

Each member of Grace Church in good standing (not under formal church discipline process) will be allowed one vote. Voting by proxy will not be allowed. The elders of Grace Church may also call for a special vote or request congregational approval for any other matter.

## **7.4 Church Discipline and Restoration**

### **7.4.1 Church Discipline**

If a member of Grace Church is consistently neglectful of his or her membership duties, consistently lives in unrepentant sin, or lives a life of inappropriate conduct by which the name of Jesus Christ is dishonored and the welfare of his church damaged, he or she may be subject to the discipline of the church. Church discipline is the biblical way by which the church holds its members accountable and provides a strength for their perseverance in the faith.

Though not an exhaustive list, the following sins are addressed by the New Testament Church and serve as examples of sin, which if unrepentant, might require church discipline: divisiveness (2 Thes 3:11; Tit 3:10-11; Rom 16:17-20), irresponsible and undisciplined living (1 Thes 5:14; 2 Thes 3:6-15), sexual immorality (1 Cor 5:1-13), and doctrinal heresy (1 Tim 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:16-18; 2 Jn 1:10-11).

### **7.4.2 Purpose**

The purpose of church discipline is for the repentance, restoration, and spiritual growth of the individual(s) disciplined (Heb 12:1-11; Matt 18:15-17; Gal 1:6; 1 Cor 5:5). It is not to

punish or condemn, but the end goal is always restoration and perseverance in the faith. It sets an example of instruction in righteousness for other Christians (1 Cor 5:11; 1 Tim 5:20; Heb 10:24-25). Church discipline protects the purity of the church (1 Cor 5:6-7; Eph 5:27, Rev 21:2), protects the corporate witness of the church to non-Christians (Matt 5:13-16; Jn 13:35; Acts 5:10-14), and reflects the glory of God by reflecting his holy character (Deut 5:11; Jn 15:8; Eph 1:4; 1 Pt 2:12).

### **7.4.3 Steps of Discipline**

In accordance with the biblical pattern outlined in Matthew 18:15-17, a member whose life evidences clear unrepentant sin will be confronted with an initial one-on-one meeting by another member of the church or by a pastor/elder. If repentance is not shown, or the pattern of sin continues, the Biblical model calls for further meetings with more than one member or with the elders. In such cases where these steps of informal discipline fail, with utmost patience and continual grace, the elders will consider placing the member under **formal church discipline**. The process of formal church discipline, as outlined in Scripture, involves public admonition before the gathered members of the church, a call to repentance and prayer for repentance by the members of the church via official mail and via other unofficial means (texts, calls, letters, etc.), and may include a prohibition from communion at the Lord's Table. If this step still does not result in repentance and a turning from habitual sin, the last step in the process of church discipline is for the membership of Grace Church to formally remove the member under discipline from

the membership of the church. This removal is done by a majority vote of at least 80%.

#### **7.4.4 Special Processes**

The elders of the church, after prayer and consultation with one another and the Scriptures, may choose to expedite the formal church discipline process. Elders are called to protect the flock and some forms of sinful conduct deemed harmful to the flock may require immediate attention and action (Acts 20:28-31; Titus 3:10; 1 Cor 5:1-5). However, for any formal removal from membership, the elders must still submit to the required congregational vote.

#### **7.4.5 Restoration**

The purpose of church discipline is *always* for repentance and restoration. If at any point in the formal church discipline process the offender demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect will be made publicly before the members of the church, that the church may rejoice and gently and judiciously restore the repentant believer to the fellowship of the church. Former members who have been removed from membership because of Church discipline may regain membership status by meeting with an elder, receiving appropriate affirmation from the congregation, and by re-signing the church covenant.

#### **7.5 Termination of Membership**

Termination of membership at Grace Church will be recognized by the church following (1) Death, (2) Transfer of membership by members in good standing to another church, (3) As the final step in the process of formal church discipline per the recommendation of

the elders and as affirmed by appropriate congregational vote, (4) by personal request of a member in good standing. If the member is in the process of formal church discipline, the request may be denied until the disciplinary process has been properly concluded.

### **ARTICLE VIII. Meetings**

#### **8.1 Corporate Worship**

A regular corporate gathering will be held once a week on Sundays. The purpose of the corporate gathering will be for worship through song, prayer, reading and teaching of the Scriptures, and partaking in the Lord's Supper through corporate communion. Believer's baptism will be regularly celebrated per the timing and direction of the elders. Other meetings of the corporate body for worship may be held throughout the week as the elders determine.

#### **8.2 Members Meeting**

There will be a regular members' meeting at least every quarter, at some time apart from a public worship service. In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of Christ. The elders shall oversee the members meetings, set the agenda, and appoint a moderator/emcee to lead the meeting. Provided the elders provide at least two weeks of notice, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present.

Business of members meetings will normally consist of corporate worship and prayer,

announcement of candidacy, vote of confirmation of elders, matters of formal church discipline, vote of confirmation of new members and signing of church covenant, vote of confirmation of change in constitution, statement of faith, or church covenant, and other important announcements or actions the elders believe may substantially impact the direction or operation of the church's ministry.

## **ARTICLE IX. Church Government**

### **9.1 Authority**

We acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the head of and Lord of Grace Church. In attempting to define how the authority in the universal church is passed on from Jesus Christ to individual local churches, we recognize that the New Testament nowhere prescribes a fully exhaustive form of church government, but instead prescribes certain practices, offices, and responsibilities. As these practices, offices, and responsibilities relate to functional authority in the church, the Biblical witness is clear on at least two realities: 1) it is the *prescribed* authority of the local church to exercise the practice of church discipline (Mt 16:13-20; 18:15) on both members and elders (1 Cor 5:9-13; 2 Cor 2:5-8; 1 Tim 5:19), and to keep watch over their collective doctrine and to look out for false teachers (Phil 3:2; 1 Jn 4:1-6); 2) it is the *prescribed* reality that the New Testament teaches elders are to have genuine authority that the church is to submit to—authority that the New Testament deems appropriate to describe as “ruling” (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17).

In light of these realities, the Scriptures are clear that both the congregation and the elders have a shared authority, underneath the authority of Christ the head. The congregation's authority is to be the binding and loosing in church discipline (Mt 16:13-20; 18:15) and to keep watch over the doctrine of the church and who teaches there; the elders' authority is to be that of “ruling” authority in all other matters of church governance and in equipping the saints for the mission of the church. This shared authority, for the purposes of Grace Church, will be called “Elder-Led Congregationalism”. This language maintains the Biblical language of the elders' authority to rule the Church of God well, but grants the congregation rightful authority in specific areas prescribed by Scripture. In practice, Elder-Led Congregationalism, as maintained by Grace Church, means all authority in church governance, except for the authority granted to the congregation as prescribed in Scripture, resides with the elders.

### **9.2 Church Officers**

For the sake of his church and per the example and command of Scripture, God has appointed two offices in the church: pastors/elders and deacons. A healthy New Testament gospel church should be officially led and served in at least these two primary ways. This does not mean there is no room for any other forms of leadership or service in the church (staff, community group leaders, ministry team leaders, finance committees, etc.), but any church offices not organized effectively into these two categories are extra biblical and should be considered with wisdom and care using

biblical principles.

### **9.3 Pastors/Elders**

It is the position of Grace Church that the New Testament terms for pastor (poimen), elder (presbuteros) and likewise the term overseer (episkopos) speak to the same office in the church, with the same authority and responsibilities. A survey of appropriate passages includes: Acts 20:17-28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-2; and Ephesians 4:1-11. This document uses the term pastor and elder interchangeably. The elders of Grace Church shall exist in a team normally comprised of no less than two men. If at any time there remains less than three elders at Grace Church, the elders may rely on interim leadership, per the restrictions outlined in Article 9, Section 4 of this document.

#### **9.3.1 Qualifications**

The biblical expectations and qualifications for pastor/elders, can be separated into three categories: character, calling, and ability. Pastor/elders should exhibit character in strict alignment with the qualifications for elders listed in 1 Tim 3:2-7, 2 Tim 2:24-25, and Titus 1:6-9. Since pastors/elders are to be examples to the flock (1 Pet 5:3), they should likewise exhibit healthy rhythms of life and godliness that all Christians are called to, setting an example “in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12).

Pastors/elders should also exhibit a clear calling to the office (1 Tim 3:1). That calling should be affirmed by others and personally discerned through patience and prayer. Calling also speaks to specific fit in a

particular local church. A pastor/elder may feel called to the office generally, but not be a good fit (because of gifting, personality, or other outside circumstances) to shepherd and lead as a pastor/elder at Grace Church. In the expectation of calling, differences in doctrine of candidates with the agreed upon doctrine of Grace Church will be examined and assessed to make sure that the candidate is a good fit for pastoral ministry in Grace Church and does not differ theologically or doctrinally on issues that would prevent them from serving faithfully and submitting humbly to the other pastors/elders.

Finally, pastor/elders should exhibit a biblical ability and competency for the task at hand. Pastors/elders are called to shepherd, care, and pray for the flock. They are also called clearly to be “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:4; 2 Timothy 2:24) and to “give instruction in sound doctrine” (Titus 1:9). This means that pastors/elders must exhibit appropriate ability and competency in public teaching and preaching, as well as a robust and appropriate grasp and understanding of sound biblical doctrine and diverse theological categories.

No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his time as an elder.

#### **9.3.2 Types of Pastors**

Grace Church may have elders who serve vocationally as elders, employed through the work of the church, as well as those that serve as elders while serving vocationally in another field. Both vocational pastors and non vocational pastors shall share equal authority in all the duties and responsibilities of their office. Biblically and functionally there is no difference among the elders and

all rule in matters designated to the elder team (all matters of church governance and ministry not specifically designated to the congregation) with equal authority.

### **9.3.3 Responsibilities and Roles**

The fundamental responsibility of the pastors/elders is to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. The elders are responsible for ruling and governing the church within the authority given to them, for teaching the Word of God, and for tending to the flock of God in his church via intentional pastoral care. The responsibilities of the elders also include but are not limited to: interviewing prospective members; examining, assessing, training and nominating candidates for the offices of the church; hiring, firing and dismissing Church employees and staff as prescribed in the constitution and bylaws; scheduling and moderating normal members meetings; conducting worship services, overseeing the administration of the ordinances of the church; equipping the saints for the work of ministry; teaching the whole counsel of God; counseling; visiting and praying for the sick; coordinating and promoting the various ministries of the church, and mobilizing the Church for the mission of God.

Pastors may designate certain specific responsibilities to members of the elder team by assigning them specific titles or roles.

These titles are created and assigned according to the discretion of the elder team. Assignment of specific responsibility or title to specific elders does not designate a resignation of the duty of all elders collectively, but rather represents a desire to allocate specific responsibility for vision in

ministry according to gifts, time, vocation, desire, and conviction. These titles or specific responsibilities should be held loosely in favor of the general duties and Biblical responsibilities given to every pastor/elder (to pray, to teach, to guard doctrine, to care/shepherd, to rule well, etc.). A designation or change of specific responsibilities or title for an existing vocational or lay elder must be publicly announced to the membership and requires a unanimous vote by the elder team.

### **9.3.4 Nomination, Affirmation, and Ordination**

The elder team is responsible for nominating elder candidates. A unanimous vote will be required for the elder team to nominate an elder candidate. For every candidate put forward by the elders, whether from within the congregation or outside of the congregation, an assessment and training period of at least 3 months will take place. In tandem with any necessary training, both the current pastor/elders and the congregation will have necessary time to assess the character, calling, and ability of the elder candidate.

During the assessment and training period, an appropriate biography and theological questionnaire will be available to the congregation, in order to help in the assessment process.

If at any point in the assessment process the candidate is deemed by the current pastor/elders as failing to meet or unlikely to meet the expectations of the office, the candidate may be removed from the assessment period. This does not disqualify

the candidate from any possibility of future candidacy.

After the allotted assessment and training period has passed, candidates will be brought before the members of the congregation for a vote. The vote to ordain a candidate into pastoral office will require an 80% majority in order to pass. Voting by proxy will not be allowed. After confirmation by a vote of the membership of Grace Church, the elder candidate will be ordained in front of the gathered congregation into pastoral office.

### **9.3.5 Removal**

An elder may be removed from office due to resignation or dismissal. A notice of resignation shall be required to be submitted to the elder team at least three weeks prior to resignation, barring personal or family emergency. An elder who resigns from office in good standing as a member of the church may be eligible for the office again, but must submit to a waiting period of at least one year and submit to the normal process for elder candidacy and confirmation upon return.

A written notice of the proposed removal of any elder shall be given to such elder at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting at which an action to effectuate such removal is to be taken, to ensure that the elder is given a reasonable opportunity to defend himself. The elder shall have the opportunity to answer the charges in the presence of his accusers, but shall not be present during the discussion and vote on his removal. Such removal shall take place only upon and after an 80% vote of the elders. The elder under consideration for removal shall not have

voting rights while such removal is considered.

Any church member with reason to believe one or more elders should be dismissed due to disqualifying sin should first express concern directly to the elder in question, then to the elder team. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instruction of Matt 18:15-17 and 1 Tim 5:17-21. If the evidence against the elder(s) in question is deemed to stand by 80% of the non-accused elder team, a proposal of removal will be submitted for review by the elder team. If the elder is removed due to disqualifying sin, the elders reserve the right to not disclose the details of the transgression, but must inform the congregation of the removal, in keeping with 1 Tim 5:20.

If a church member has a reason to believe that all elders should be dismissed due to disqualifying sin, the accused elders and their accusers shall commit a process of at least three meetings in the course of a month's time, with the board of deacons present, in order to attempt to bring clarity and resolution. After a month's time, if a resolution has not been met, the charges of disqualification will be officially brought before the members of the church and a plain presentation of the details of the dispute will be given by the pastors and deacons.

### **9.3.6 Elder Meetings**

Regular meetings of the elders shall be held when necessary or needed as determined by the elder team. Any meeting of the elders may be held at the call of any elder, subject to giving adequate notice to the entire elder team. The meeting may be held at such place as may be designated by the elder team. A



proper quorum is defined as at least 2/3 of the elders present. A passing vote on all manners of church governance or ministry under the authority of the elder team not specified by this document must be determined by a simple majority of all the elders.

### 9.3.7 Sabbatical

Pastors who serve for three years continuously will be eligible for a one month sabbatical. Eligibility for sabbatical will renew every three years of service, and length of sabbatical will increase by one month for every three years of service, up to three months of eligible time. The purpose of sabbatical is for rest, time with family, communion with the Lord, and renewed vision for the work of ministry. Specific objectives for sabbaticals may be set on a case by case basis per the discretion of the elder team. The elder team reserves the right to recommend a sabbatical for one of its members at any time in order to promote healthiness, repentance, and continued faithful service.

## 9.4 Deacons

The office of deacon and the qualifications for the office are described in 1 Tim 3:8-13. Deacons are the selfless servants of the church. Every deacon must be a member of Grace Church in good standing. The church shall recognize men and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. The number of deacons will be determined by the needs of the ministry and the call and qualifications of church members.

### 9.4.1 Responsibilities

Deacons and deaconesses serve by caring for the members of the congregation, assisting and visiting those in need, and supporting new and existing ministries of the church. The elder team may designate specific roles of service to the deacons per need. The deacons may be organized in the most fitting way to accomplish the mission of the church.

### 9.4.2 Nomination and Selection

Deacons will be nominated from within the church via an online form regularly released to the membership. From the nomination list, deacons will be chosen by the elder team for assessment and presentation of candidacy before the congregation. A character assessment period of at least two months will be required, after which the deacon candidate will be installed as a deacon and presented before the gathered membership of the church. Deacons may resign office with at least a two week notice to the elders, except in the case of personal or family emergency. The elders may dismiss a deacon from office with a 80% of the elders due to disqualification of character or a failure to fulfill the requirements of the office.

## 9.5 Staff

The elder team may establish paid and/or volunteer roles and ministry positions and teams to assist in fulfilling their responsibilities. Two types of staff positions will exist in Grace Church: **ministry staff** and **support staff**. **Ministry staff** will work in and operate under limited authority, per the direction and direct oversight of the elder team and/or a specific elder designated by

the elder team. Ministry staff will be nominated, assessed, and hired by the elder team. The elder team must allow at least two months between nomination and hiring for the membership to help assess the candidate. All ministry staff must meet the Biblical qualifications for deacons. **Support staff** will work and operate in administrative roles not directly tied to ministry, including but not limited to bookkeeping, secretarial assistance, cleaning and facilities, and media/production. The elder team will be responsible for crafting and approving job descriptions, pay rate, and delegating specific responsibilities to ministry or support staff. All staff will be required to sign Grace Church's statement of faith.

### 9.5.1 Supervision

The elders have the responsibility for the hiring, supervision, evaluation, and dismissal of all staff positions. Action to hire or dismiss a member of the staff will be determined by a majority vote of the elder team. If deemed appropriate, the elders may delegate supervision and oversight responsibilities to a single elder or a smaller group of elders.

### 9.6 Committees

The team of elders may delegate certain of their responsibilities to individuals, committees, or other groups in the Church. This delegated responsibility remains under the oversight of the elders, at least one elder must be a part of every committee formed, and all elders will have voting authority on all committees or groups appointed by the elders. Examples of committees may include: pastoral search committee, finance committee, communications committee, etc. The elder team reserves the right to dissolve

committees if they have served their purpose or no longer act as a benefit to the church.

### 9.7 Interim Leadership

In the event that there ever remains less than three active elders at Grace Church, whether due to removal of elder(s), resignation of elder(s), personal emergency, or extended sabbatical of elder(s), the elders may deem it necessary to appoint interim leadership positions, consisting of capable men within or without the church, as part of an interim leadership team. This leadership team will be tasked with performing many of the pastoral duties within the life of the church, but will not be given the office of pastor/elder. While it is possible and healthy that many of the men on the leadership team will aspire to and even receive candidacy for the office of elder, those men must still go through the normal elder process of training, assessment, and confirmation, in order to remain faithful to the Scriptural command to "not be hasty in the laying on of hands" (1 Timothy 5:22); the interim leadership team does not replace or expedite any elder confirmation process. The interim leadership team may also consist of and be led by an interim pastor, who will, unlike the leadership team, assume the office of pastor/elder, albeit with limited authority due to the interim nature of the position. The interim pastor will not hold any final authority or decision making power on certain matters of governance in the church, including change of doctrine/bylaws and hiring/firing of staff.

The leadership team will serve a minimum of **three months**, with possibility of renewal per decision of the pastors/elders towards a maximum end of **one year**. Once again, this structure is meant only to help the church

return to a place of healthy, Biblical, eldership. The elders reserve the right to abolish the interim leadership team at any time if this goal is not being met or if appropriate health is reached.

Members of the interim leadership team must be men and members of good standing in the church, or in the case of the interim pastor, a recommended and experienced man inside/outside the church who has gone through the appropriate appointment and confirmation process. These men must exhibit godly character in all areas of life, a healthy desire for the work at hand, and a minimum capability to fulfill their given responsibilities. The qualifications for a deacon in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 will serve as the standard for judging Godly character. All members of the interim leadership team will be nominated by the pastor/elders of Grace Church and confirmed by the membership of Grace Church by an 80% vote. Voting by proxy will not be allowed.

## **ARTICLE X. Indemnification**

None of the pastor/elders or staff of the corporation of Grace Church will be personally liable to the corporation for monetary damages for any act of commission in his/her capacity except to the extent a statute of the state of Texas expressly precludes elimination or limitation of such personal liability.

## **ARTICLE XI. Financial Administration**

### **11.1 Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of the church will be the calendar year, beginning on January 1 and ending on December 31.

### **11.2 Finance Committee**

The elders will appoint a finance committee to administer the funds of the church, made up of at least one elder and at least two members in good standing with Grace Church. A chairman will be elected by the committee to oversee bookkeeping and to help provide regular quarterly and annual reports. An 80% vote of the finance committee and the elder team will be required to incur debt on behalf of the church. An 80% vote will be required by the committee and by the elder team to purchase or sell property. The finance committee will meet at least quarterly and will provide a yearly financial report and a budget to the church to be approved by the pastors at least 1 month before the beginning of the new fiscal year. The proposed budget must also be submitted to the members at least two months before the beginning of the fiscal year to provide the membership the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. The congregation must be notified of any unbudgeted expense approved by the pastors exceeding \$10,000 at least 2 months before the expense is made.

## **ARTICLE XII. Amendments**

These bylaws, policies, and procedures will be reviewed at least annually by the elder team. Any proposition for amendments, modifications, or changes will require a unanimous vote by the elder team, and will be presented before the congregation for

approval and affirmation, requiring an 80% vote.

### **ARTICLE XIII. Dissolution**

Grace Church will be dissolved by a unanimous decision of the elder board and an 80% vote of the membership at a gathered members meeting. In the event that Grace

Church shall be dissolved as a corporate entity, the elders will have full authority and responsibility to distribute any assets of the corporation in a manner fully consistent with Article VI.02 Section 3 of the Texas Nonprofit Corporation Act and Relevant Regulations of the Internal Revenue Code. All assets will be distributed to other churches and/or class exempt organizations.