



**GRACE CHURCH**



**MEMBERSHIP  
BOOKLET**

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# Session 1: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

## What is the church?

*The local church is a congregation of baptized believers who regularly gather together for biblical worship and have committed or covenanted together as a sign of their union with Christ and partnership in the gospel.*

### THE LOCAL CHURCH IS...

#### A CONGREGATION

*Church Universal vs. Church Local*

Matthew 18:19-20; Hebrews 12:22-24

#### Of BAPTIZED BELIEVERS

*The sign of entrance into God's family*

Matthew 28:18-20

#### Who regularly gather for BIBLICAL WORSHIP

*To sing, pray, read scripture, observe the ordinances, and hear the preached Word*

Ephesians 5:19; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Timothy 4:13; 1 Corinthians 11:17-32; 1 Timothy 4:13;  
2 Timothy 4:1-2

And are **COVENANTED TOGETHER** as a sign of their union.

*Bound together by union with Christ and shared mission*

Matthew 16:19, 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Phillipians 1:5-7

# Is Church membership Biblical?

**Matthew 18:15-17:** “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault...if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you...If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” The ability to exclude someone from “the church” presupposes that it’s known who belongs to “the church” as a member in the first place.

**Acts 5:12-13:** “Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.” So, people faced the decision of whether or not they would join the church in Jerusalem. This joining is more public and definite than an informal association.

In **1 Timothy 5:9-12**, Paul gives Timothy instructions for enrolling widows on the list of those receiving support from the church. He writes, “Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works...” While this isn’t conclusive evidence for formal church membership, it’s tough to imagine that the church in Ephesus would have kept a list of widows but not have any formal means of identifying everyone who belonged to the church.

**1 Corinthians 5:12-13:** “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside.” Paul called upon the Corinthian church to judge those who were inside the church, not those who were outside. They were responsible for the testimony of those who belonged to the church, not those who didn’t. This passage makes no sense if the Corinthian church didn’t have some public, formal means by which people identified themselves with the church.

**2 Corinthians 2:6:** Paul writes concerning a man the Corinthian church had excommunicated, “For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.” This man’s exclusion from the church was a punishment by the majority. You can’t have a majority unless you have a definite set of people from which a majority is constituted.

# What are the benefits of church membership?

*From 9Marks of a Healthy Church*

**It commits you, the Christian** It's good to commit yourself to love and serve others. You will grow as a Christian as you commit to encourage, build up, strengthen, serve, rebuke, and pray for other Christians.

**Others are committed to you** Becoming a member of a church means joining with an entire group of Christians who have now covenanted to watch over you spiritually. If you're a member of a church you have an entire church full of people who are publicly committed to love you and serving you and watching over you. Additionally, you're now part of family that will help you through life's burdens, struggling, and sufferings. You're free to make your needs known to the church and the church committed to helping meet them.

**Elder Protection** If you're a member of a church, that church's elders should know you, care for you, pray for you, and personally counsel and teach you. As a member of their church, they are accountable to God for how they lead you.

**Safety net** Being a church member means that a whole church full of people are committed to helping you live a life that is pleasing to God, even to the point of excluding you from the church if you stop repenting of sin. While this sounds harsh to some, to those of us who know the deceitfulness of sin, this is an immensely comforting and encouraging reality.

**Assurance** Membership is the church's affirmation of the validity of someone's profession of faith. The church looks at a person's life, hears their explanation of the gospel and how they came to believe it, and says, "You look like a Christian to us. So join us. Watch over our lives and we'll watch over yours." So while membership in a church doesn't guarantee that someone is a Christian, it should assure believers of the genuineness of their faith.

# What is the responsibility of a church member?

Church membership is both an office and a job. Once you join a church, you have something to do! Church members are responsible to see the **kingdom of God advanced** through discipleship and service, to see the **doctrine of the church guarded** by the affirming of the right profession of faith, and to see the **purity of the church maintained** by the giving and withholding of the assurance of salvation.

## **ADVANCING THE KINGDOM**

Jesus makes it clear that the gospel unified, Spirit-empowered local church is to be his primary mission force in seeing the kingdom of God go out into the world (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 2:12; 1 Pet 2:9). The primary way this happens is through the fulfillment of the great commission. A church member is a Christian who has taken seriously his job to be a part of the church militant in the mission of making disciples. The church member also takes part in advancing the kingdom through serving the church. Every church member has a part to play in seeing the gospel go forward (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

## **GUARDING DOCTRINE**

Church members are called collectively to watch out for false teachers and to test doctrines to determine what is true and false (Phil 3:2; 1 Jn 4:1-6). The members, not just the pastors or teachers, are responsible broadly for the doctrine of the church.

In Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus confesses Peter as the rock because he makes the right profession of faith. The apostles are given the authority to judge the right profession of faith: to hold onto as true what is bound in heaven (the truth of the gospel) and to let go of and condemn what is loosed in heaven (the false confession). Jesus is saying the authority is given here to the apostles to dismiss someone as not a Christian if they fail to provide the true gospel profession: Jesus is the Christ. Just a few chapters later, Jesus gives the instructions to the church as a whole. Jonathan Leeman calls this guarding the “what” of the gospel.

At Grace Church, we help to guard the doctrine of the church by giving the members the authority to affirm elders to watch their doctrine, and by making the members the final arbiters of the statement of faith.

## **MAINTAINING PURITY**

In Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus flips the script from chapter 16. Again, he talks of the keys of binding and loosing, of the authority to render a judgement in Heaven's name. Except this time the focus is more on who is confessing, not what they are confessing. There are times when someone might confess the right thing, and yet their life denies it. This is the proof text for the practice of Church Discipline. Look who Jesus gives this authority to: the whole church.

The guarding of the “who” of the gospel is the responsibility and authority of the church member to practice church discipline. They are to make sure they give and withhold assurance rightly. The last thing you want to give someone is false assurance. Church discipline is the means by which church members lovingly and gently call an unrepentant member to repentance, in order to restore them to the right giving of assurance of salvation and affirmation of faith within the church. At Grace Church, we help maintain our purity together by giving our members the responsibility to vote to affirm new members and by giving the ultimate responsibility of church discipline to the members.

# Session 2: GRACE CHURCH

## Who is Grace Church?

### OUR HISTORY

After a long life as “Grace Community Church”, Grace Church was replanted in 2011 with the aim of “rediscovering the gospel”. In partnership with the Acts29 network, Grace Church took on new life as a body of believers committed to understanding the importance of the good news of Jesus Christ as not only the catalyst for salvation but the central doctrine of the Scripture and the focal point of the Christian life. The church began to experience growth as we discovered the joy in Christ’s gospel. Some discovered Jesus for the first time, but many rediscovered the gospel that they thought they had needed to move on from.

After a few years of mobile church and meeting in schools in the greater Waco area, the pastors of Grace Church saw the need of a gospel-centered church in the heart of Waco. An old community bowling alley at 4610 Bosque was selected as the future home of Grace Church and renovations were completed in early 2016. Grace Church sits in the crosshairs of an area of significant economic and racial diversity, so a new goal was born: to make Jesus known to the church, and therefore the city of Waco and the world.

In late 2018, our church experienced significant shifts in leadership as both a founding pastor and other lay and staff pastors resigned and moved on to other ministry opportunities. In June 2019, after an interim period, new pastors were affirmed at Grace Waco and we are as committed as ever to the vision of making Jesus known.

### MISSION AND VISION

**Grace Church exists to glorify God by making Jesus known in the church, the city, and the world.** We recognize the importance of *revelation*, the idea that God has made himself known to us in the gospel which shows Jesus’ person and work. Our job description as those who have seen and believe in Jesus is to disperse that revelation wherever we go. Where the true Jesus is truly known, God is glorified in transforming hearts and lives and making dead people alive. Where the true Jesus is known, disciples of Jesus are made, multiplied, and strengthened and the mission of the church of God is fulfilled.

## CORE VALUES

In our mission of making Jesus known, we affirm the following core values. These values shape the culture, decisions, and teaching of Grace Church, but are not a part of the statement of faith every member must fully affirm.

*As a spiritual family who Makes Jesus Known, we are committed wholeheartedly to developing the following values together:*

### *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.



## LITURGY AND WORSHIP

The Sunday morning worship gathering is one of the most important rhythms in the Christian life. Grace Church is committed to robust Biblical worship that follows a pattern of revelation and response. We see Jesus made known through the word of God, and then we respond. We acknowledge that the main way God reveals himself in his Word is through the good news of the gospel. In this way, our worship should be a “feast” of the gospel.

In order to feast well we follow a planned out liturgy (rhythm) of singing, confession, scripture reading, and prayer. We preach to show Christ from the Biblical text by drawing out meaning and application from the verses themselves, acknowledging that all of Scripture points to Jesus. Finally, every week we celebrate and remember the life and work of Christ by taking part in communion together.

## COMMUNITY GROUPS

Community Groups exist to lead the people of Grace Church into **gospel-centered belonging** and **missional discipleship** through confession and repentance, shared life, the study of Scripture, prayer, and accountability to mission. Our groups are co-ed and strive to be intergenerational. They meet every week in the homes of our members all throughout the city. This is the primary way we exist in community outside of our gathering on Sunday morning and every one of our members is expected to be actively involved in the life of a community group.

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Discipleship Groups exist to lead the people of Grace Church into **gospel-centered belonging** and **missional discipleship** through confession and repentance, shared life, the study of Scripture, prayer, and accountability to mission in a deeper and more intentional scope than Community Groups. These groups are based on gender and consist of no more than 5 members meeting weekly.

## OUR PARTNERSHIPS

**Acts 29** is a diverse, global family of church-planting churches. They exist to encourage, resource, facilitate, support, and equip churches to plant churches that will plant more churches, all for the goal of seeing the gospel of Jesus proclaimed where it isn't. We affirm the Acts 29 theological distinctives and are honored to be a part of this growing network.

**The Southern Baptist Convention** is a network of like-minded churches who cooperate together to reach the world for Christ. The SBC focuses its cooperation on evangelism, church planting, international missions, and seminary training for future pastors and missionaries. In partnering with the SBC, we affirm their core set of beliefs, the Baptist Faith and Message (2000).

# Who leads Grace Church?

## OUR ELDERS

Buck Rogers | Pastor of Care and Discipleship

Bracken Arnhart | Pastor of Stewardship

Drake Osborn | Pastor of Teaching and Liturgy

Dave Becker | Pastor of Teaching and Leadership

## Qualifications and Appointment of 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. The elders of Grace Church exist in a team normally comprised of no less than two men.

The biblical expectations and qualifications for pastor/elders, can be separated into three categories: **character, calling, and competency**. 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.

The elder team is responsible for nominating elder candidates. A unanimous vote of the elders 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. 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. 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.

## **Responsibilities of Elders**

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 share equal authority in all the duties and responsibilities of their office. Biblically and functionally there is no difference among the elders.

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. Pastors may designate

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

## OUR DEACONS

Amy and Blake Jimenez | For the City

**Laura Green** | Finance

Katherine Wilson | Grace Kids (Administration)

Luke Durell | Music and Liturgy

Luke Garst | Music

**Jake Anthony** | College

Lisa Osborn | Women's Discipleship

Bill Osborn | Building and Maintenance

Kendal Rabine | Grace Kids (Preschool)

Scott Rabine | Member Care/Greeting

**Grace Nemy** | Kids (Leadership)

Sarah Freeland | Library

**\*\* Bold designates staff deacon (part-time or full-time)**

## Qualifications and Responsibilities of Deacons

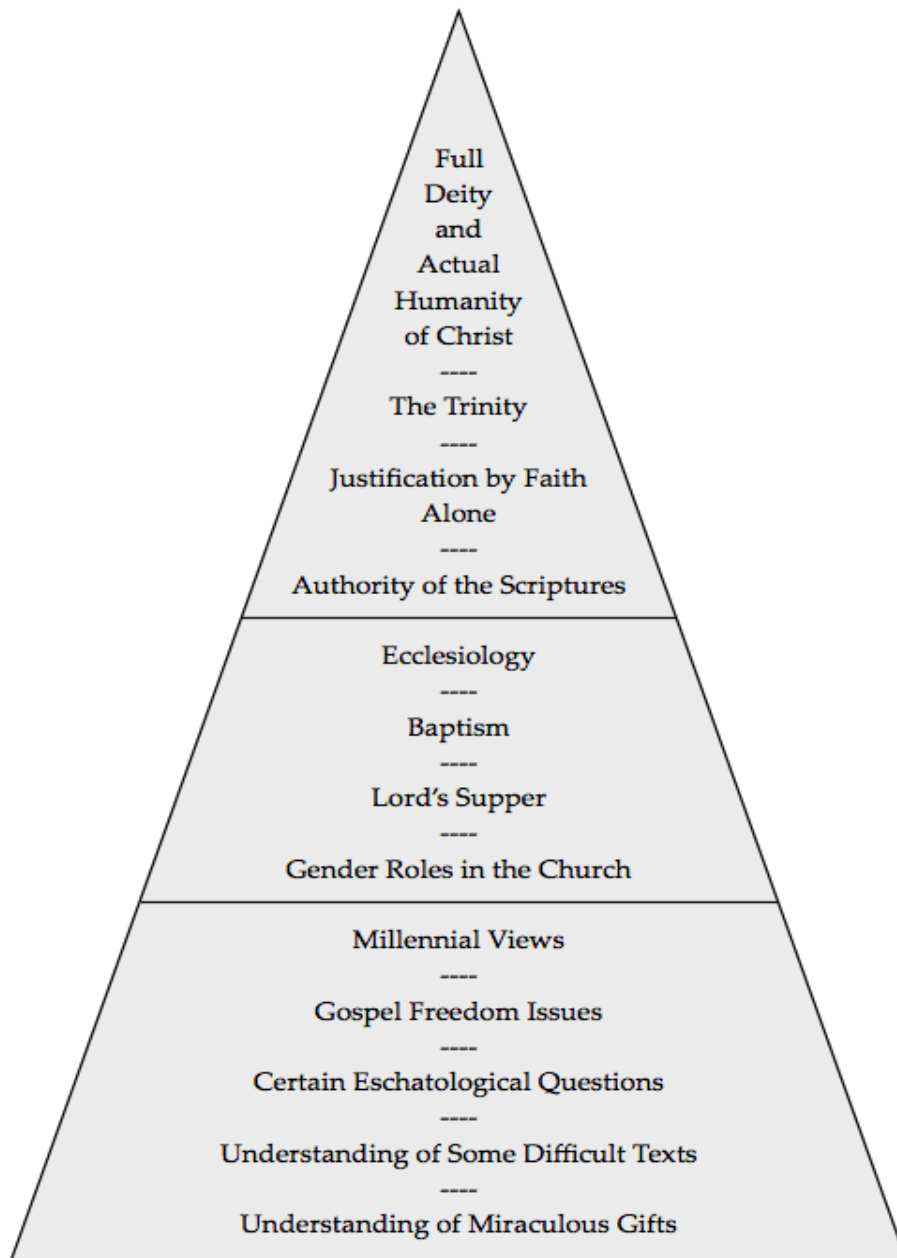
The qualifications for the office of deacon are described in 1 Tim 3:8-13. Deacons are the selfless servants of the church. Every deacon must be a member of Grace Church in good standing. Grace Church recognizes both men and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service as eligible for the office of deacon. Deacons are chosen and affirmed by the elders, but may be nominated from the congregation.

Deacons 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 are organized in the most fitting way to accomplish the mission of the church.

# What does Grace Church believe?

## TIERS OF THEOLOGICAL BELIEFS

*Al Mohler's Theological Triage*



**First-tier** doctrines are also called “gospel doctrines”. These are the beliefs that are central to orthodox Christianity. To get one of these beliefs wrong is to get the gospel wrong and risk damnation.

The **second-tier** of doctrine protects the church and the people of God, promoting unity among specific practices. Christians can disagree on these doctrines and maintain strong bonds of unity, but most of the time these doctrines break fellowship in a local church because of their distinct nature. Most churches require from their members the affirmation of and submission to these doctrines, but not total unity.

**Third-tier** doctrines are the doctrines that like minded Christians in the fellowship of the same church can disagree on healthily. They may impact ministry values or interpretive methods, but they do not directly impact the unity of the church.

Grace Church locates both our first and second tier doctrines in our statement of faith. This statement must be fully affirmed by all members of Grace Church. While this statement might maintain language on some “second-tier” doctrines that members may disagree on and still maintain gospel unity, submission to these doctrines help promote health in the church. You will notice that the Statement of Faith is very clear on “first-tier” issues, broad enough not to exclude all differences in “second-tier” issues, but narrow enough to require unity on the ones that bring health and clarity to the church, and very broad on “third-tier issues.”

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

**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 ([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](#)).

**MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY** 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 Corinthians 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 OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS** We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowing of spiritual gifts. It is, however, the believer's responsibility to attempt to develop 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 ([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 ([Matthew 28:19, 20](#); [Acts 2:41, 42](#); [Acts 16:31](#); [Acts 18:8](#); [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#)).

**BYLAWS** A copy of the church bylaws are available online at [gracewaco.com/teaching](http://gracewaco.com/teaching) or by request. The bylaws help shape the policies of our church and orient us towards biblical faithfulness.



## TEACHING POSITIONS

We want to be clear on the biblical and theological convictions that shape the teaching of our church. These positions are not 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 commune together with Christ in a covenant meal by remembering Christ's work and renewing their commitment to Christ and his church.

### CHURCH GOVERNMENT

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, 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-Ruled 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-Ruled 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.

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## 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)*

*Taken from the Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement. A new statement crafted by pastors and members of our congregation will be drafted after study and discussion in Fall 2022.*

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## **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, but repentance is necessary. 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)*

# **What is the missional future of Grace Church?**

## CHURCH PLANTING PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORK

The local church is God's primary means of accomplishing his mission on earth. Grace Church desires to see churches planted and strengthened so that the gospel of Jesus could be proclaimed and the true Jesus might be known in Waco and beyond. To that end, we want to be a church-planting church and one that supports the work of church planting and revitalization in the world. In addition to seeking to plant more churches, we are committed to developing specific relationships and partnerships throughout the world.

### GRACE CHURCH HEWITT

In 2018, Grace Church planted our first church, Grace Church Hewitt. Pastors and leaders from Grace Waco responded to the call to be sent out for gospel witness. Hewitt is about 20 minutes outside of Waco in a developing area in need of gospel witness. Since it's planting, Hewitt has seen fruitfulness in their faithfulness and is now a fully self-sustaining church. Grace Church Waco and Grace Church Hewitt are committed to maintain a strong partnership into the future as sister churches in order to see Jesus known and more churches planted and strengthened. The primary way we partner with Grace Church Hewitt is through the development and oversight of our residency program where we aim to raise up future church leaders, planters, and missionaries.

### CROWDED HOUSE UNION

In 2019, Grace Church sent Ross Rohlmeier, an international missionary and resident, to take part in a new church plant in Sheffield, England called Crowded House Union. They are passionate about sharing the good news about Christ with those who have little opportunity to hear, in particular with those who, by virtue of religion or culture, have no interest in hearing this good news. Our developing partnership with Crowded House Union allows us to support their work of future church planting among unreached people groups and in hard to reach areas.

## MINISTRY AND PASTORAL RESIDENCY

Grace church offers two residency programs. Our **ministry residency** is open to men and women, is focused on more generalized ministry, and is ideal for recent college graduates

or those developing and discerning a call to ministry. The **pastoral residency** is designed for mature Christian men who sense a call to pastoral ministry and desire quipping and training.

*The **Ministry Residency** at Grace Church exists to make Jesus known by raising up men and women who are trained and equipped to strengthen local churches, make disciples, and fulfill the great commission.*

Our ministry residency is a one to two year full-time ministry training that is meant to develop future church leaders, pastors, counselors, and missionaries. Our residents take part in ministry rhythms that fill their week throughout the year. These rhythms consist of reading, writing, preaching, ministering, learning, and discipleship. The goal of year one is to help residents determine calling and gifting, as well as provide general theological, personal, and practical training in broad categories. The goal of year two, should the resident continue, is to provide more intentional ministry experience and coaching in ways tailored to the desires and gifting of the ministry resident.

*The **Pastoral Residency** at Grace Church exists to make Jesus known by equipping men who have experienced the call to pastoral ministry to faithfully minister the gospel through the planting and strengthening of churches.*

Besides a more general ministry residency, we have found the need to develop a new program of training for men of character who feel the specific call to pastoral ministry. Our pastoral residency training is focused intently on theological and character development that is aimed at preparing residents for a future as vocational pastors, lay pastors, church planters, or church revitalizers. The pastoral residency is a part-time program that begins each January and last for two years. Besides formal training, pastoral residents will be required to take part in certain church leadership roles and develop their pastoral heart by shadowing pastors in specific tasks and ministry during their time as a resident.

## **Our Membership Process**

### Step 1: Membership Class

The membership class includes is meant to provide an intro into the doctrine and culture of Grace Church and help you along the membership process. This includes a time of teaching and a place for you to ask all the questions you have about the church and what your role as a member might look like. These classes are held periodically throughout the year at different times.

### Step 2: Membership Application/Interview

After you take part in the membership class, you will need to fill out a membership application online, which you can find at [rgacewaco.com/membership](http://rgacewaco.com/membership). Then a pastor will schedule a meeting with you and your family to get to know you better and further answer any questions you might have. The goal is that one of our pastors has heard your story of life and faith, can affirm that you are a follower of Jesus, and can affirm your readiness to enter into covenant with Grace Church. Once we receive your application and meet with you, we release your bio to the church members so they can know you better and prepare to affirm you into church membership.

### Step 3: Baptism, Covenant Signing and Affirmation

This is when you get to come before the church and publicly sign our membership covenant at a members meeting, committing yourself to us and us to you. This is a time of celebration as we welcome new brothers and sisters into the visible family of God together. At this meeting, church members will vote to affirm and officially accept new members into our church.

## OUR MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Having received union with Christ by faith and been baptized as our profession of that union, and being in agreement with Grace Church's statement of faith and bylaws, we now

are led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the Grace Church church family. In doing so, we commit by the aid of the Holy Spirit:

### **To protect the unity and purity of our church,**

We will live together in Christian love; bear one another's burdens with patience; confess our sins to each other and pray for one another; avoid gossip, slander, and division; we will be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation; and we will submit to the discipline and leaders of the church (Romans 12:3-21, 4:19; 1 Peter 1:22; Ephesians 4:1-3, 29; Hebrews 13:17).

### **To share the responsibility and mission of our church,**

We will continue to meet together weekly for worship and the observance of the ordinances; to not neglect the practice of communal life together; participate in the discipline and accountability of fellow church members; and to commit to mutually guard our doctrine and to hold accountable our church leaders; we will use our gifts for the service of the church; regularly give of our financial resources for the mission of the church; commit to make and mature disciples of Jesus; and to seek the salvation of the lost as ambassadors of Christ (Matt. 5:13-16, 28:18-20; John 17:15-21, 1 Peter 2:12, 4:10; Hebrews 10:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:20).

### **And to support the testimony of the church.**

We will seek Christian maturity through the practice of spiritual disciplines; we will educate our children in the Christian faith; we will live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts; and we will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word (Phil. 1:27; Acts 2:42, Col. 3:16).

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