

**Constitution and Bylaws**

**Grace Baptist Church**

**Jackson, Mississippi**

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*amended January 19, 2003*

## **Grace Baptist Church Jackson, Mississippi**

### **PREAMBLE**

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants to unite under the name Grace Baptist Church of Jackson, Mississippi, for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and

Whereas we, the members of Grace Baptist Church, having searched the Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, have recognized the need to constitute ourselves to more closely conform to His will for the Church in this age and prepare ourselves for greater efforts in His name;

Now therefore we, the members of Grace Baptist Church, do hereby organize ourselves and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the members' Statement of Faith, the London Baptist Confession of 1689 and the Church Covenant of this church.

### **ARTICLE I - NAME**

The name of this church is and shall be Grace Baptist Church.

### **ARTICLE II - PURPOSE**

This church exists by the grace of God alone, for the glory of God alone, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities.

This church shall glorify God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

Worshipping Him;

Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;

Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture;

Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work, local, domestic, and international;

Administering the ordinances of believers' baptism and the Lord's Supper;

Encouraging Biblical fellowship among believers; and

Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ.

### **ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP**

## **Section 1 - Qualifications**

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized, 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 submit 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 making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, a letter from the person's previous church, or such other evidence as the Elders deem appropriate.

## **Section 2 - Admission of Members**

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the Elders for admission and accepted by vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches.

## **Section 3 - Duties and Privileges of Membership**

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be 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. Only those shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church who are members of this congregation; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the Elders.

It is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members' meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote. Baptized members who have celebrated their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday are qualified to vote in member meetings.

In accordance with the Biblical mandate that all people provide regular financial support, and that they do not forsake gathering together for the purpose of worship, it shall be the duty of each member to evidence obedience to these mandates in a consistent manner. It is clearly taught in Scripture that Christians are to support the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate monetary giving made through the local church. This is set forth in both positive commands and favorable example. Therefore, it is the duty of each member to pledge themselves to systematic contribution for the support of this church (see Mal. 3:8-11; 2 Cor. 9:6-9; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Any member called upon to fulfill a teaching position in the church shall not teach contrary to the positions held in the Statement of Faith and the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith.

## **Section 4 - Associate Membership**

Students and others temporarily residing in the Jackson area who are members of an evangelical church may apply for associate membership. Qualifications shall be identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership must be retained. A letter of commendation will be sought from the applicant's home church.

Duties and privileges of associate members are the same as for other members except that:

when absent from the Jackson area for extended periods of time they are released from the responsibility to attend our church services and to give their financial support to our church;

while they will be encouraged to participate in the various ministries of the church, they will not be eligible to stand for any office.

Termination of associate membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for other members, except that the Elders shall notify the pastor or Elders of the home church of that termination. Associate membership will normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the Jackson area.

### **Section 5 - On Church Discipline**

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the Elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of scripture. Church discipline, then, should only be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

The purpose of such discipline should be:

For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (see Proverbs 15:5; 29:15; I Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 6:4; I Timothy 3:4-5; Hebrews 12:1-11; Psalm 119:115; 141:5; Proverbs 17:10; 25:12; 27:5; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 7:26-27; 18:15-17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; I Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 6:1-5; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; I Timothy 1:20; Titus 1:13-14; James 1:22);

For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (see Proverbs 13:20; Romans 15:14; I Corinthians 5:11; 15:33; Colossians 3:16; I Thessalonians 5:14 [note this is written to the whole church, not just to leaders]; I Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:11; Hebrews 10:24-25);

For the purity of the church as a whole (see I Corinthians 5:6-7; II Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 5:27; II John 1:10; Jude 24; Revelation 21:2);

For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (see Proverbs 28:7; Matthew 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:10-14; Ephesians 5:11; I Timothy 3:7; II Peter 2:2; I John 3:10); and

Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (see Deuteronomy 5:11; I Kings 11:2; II Chronicles 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Nehemiah 9:2; Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 36:20; Matthew 5:16; John 15:8; 18:17, 25; Romans 2:24; 15:5-6; II Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; I Peter 2:12).

### **Section 6 - Termination of Membership**

Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following the death or voluntary

resignation of any church member. Membership may be terminated as an act of church discipline at the recommendation of the Elders and with the vote of two-thirds of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members.

## **ARTICLE IV - MEETINGS**

### **Section 1 - Worship Meetings**

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.

### **Section 2 - Members' meetings**

There shall be a regular members' meeting at least once per quarter, at some time apart from a public worship service agreed upon by the membership.

In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

An Elder shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. The Elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.

There shall be an annual members' meeting, at which officers are elected, positions filled, and a budget approved by the membership no more than three nor less than one month prior to the start of the fiscal year.

Special members' meetings may be called as required by the Elders or Deacons, or at the written request of the members. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting.

## **ARTICLE V- OFFICERS**

### **Section 1 - Summary**

The Biblical offices in the church are Elders and Deacons. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

### **Section 2 - Elders**

The Elders shall be comprised of men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of Elder set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The Elders must wholeheartedly embrace the tenets held in the Statement of Faith. They must also hold to the tenets of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith with only

minor exceptions allowed. A majority of the active Eldership shall be composed of church members not in the regular pay of the church, and no Elder shall hold the office of Deacon during his tenure.

Subject to the will of the congregation, the Elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and I Peter 5:1-4, the Elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock.

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as Elders.

An Elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an Elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the Elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and I Timothy 5:17-21. Any of the Elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any members' meeting of the church.

The Elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the Deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. The Elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

The Elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The Elders may also propose paid staff positions, and Elders shall present a job description for each position to the membership for approval. The membership may approve all candidates to fill such positions or may delegate this responsibility, on a position-by-position basis, to the Elders, Deacons, or other staff member.

The Elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to the Deacons or other staff member.

The Elders shall elect a chairman who shall serve as chairman of Elders' meetings and as moderator of members' meetings. In his absence, the Elders shall appoint another Elder to fulfill these duties.

Resolutions adopted by the Elders shall be reported to the church at members' meetings and may be reversed by the church.

It shall be the duty of the Elders to record the minutes of all regular and special members'

meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the Elders, the Deacons, or the church.

The Elders shall also ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

The responsibility of the church for the financial support of its Elders is a matter of Biblical principle especially for those who labor in preaching and teaching. However, this does not exclude those from serving Elders who choose to support themselves in part or in whole by other employment. In the event that an Elder shall receive a salary from the church for his ministry, an agreement shall first be presented by the Elders to the church for its approval. Such an agreement shall include a job description, financial details, and other terms of employment.

Financial support for Elders shall be reviewed routinely as a part of the budgeting process. Recommendations for revision shall proceed from a temporary committee on staff personnel composed of Deacons and chaired by a Deacon.

### **Section 3 - Deacons**

The office of Deacon is described in I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men who are giving of themselves in service to the church, who possess gifts of leadership, and who are called to further service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as Deacons.

Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, oversee the financial activities and properties of the church, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration.

Each year the Deacons, with the approval of the Elders, shall present to the church an itemized budget at the regular members' meeting preceding the annual members' meeting. This budget shall be presented for discussion at that time and called up for a vote at the annual members' meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the Elders and Deacons.

The Deacons shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at each members' meeting. They shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the Elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.

The Deacons, with the agreement of the Elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

Resolutions adopted by the Deacons shall be reported first to the Elders and thereafter to the church at members' meetings. All such resolutions may be reversed by resolution of the Elders, or by the church.

The Deaconate shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds

belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. They shall render to the Elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions and of the financial condition of the church.

## **ARTICLE VI - ELECTIONS**

### **Section 1 - Principles**

The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process;

Nominations should proceed after examination by the Elders and the unanimous support thereof;

All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;

The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Section 2 - Selection of Officers**

Any member of the congregation may present at any time to the Elders nominations for the office of Elder or Deacon. After examining and evaluating the nominee's qualifications a slate of names of any qualified nominees to serve as Elders and/or Deacons shall be presented by the Elders to the church at the previous members' meeting (providing that previous meeting occurred at least two months prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the Elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the Elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting.

The chairman of the Elders shall declare elected all persons receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast for any office; abstentions shall not be considered as votes cast.

Should the needs of the church require Elders other than are available within the church, the Elders may recommend to the church a qualified candidate from outside the church. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential Elder and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the tenets required of Elders as articulated in Article V, Section 2 of this constitution.

## **ARTICLE VII - DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matthew 18:15-20, I Corinthians 6:1-8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities. The Elders shall adopt policies and procedures to effect these requirements and aspirations.

## **ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS**

The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a three-quarters vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

The revised version of this constitution shall be made available to all church members by the church clerk.

*Constitution and Bylaws originally adopted on May 21, 2000 by the founding members of Grace Baptist Church.*

*Constitution and Bylaws amended on August 20, 2000 as follows:*

- 1. ARTICLE III - Section 3, second paragraph, second sentence was added which states, "Baptized members who have celebrated their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday are qualified to vote in member meetings."*
- 2. ARTICLE III - Section 3, last sentence was added as follows: "Any member called upon to fulfill a teaching position in the church shall not teach contrary to the positions held in the Statement of Faith and the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith."*
- 3. ARTICLE V - Section 2 through and including ARTICLE VIII was added.*

4. *The second sentence of point 1 of the Statement of Faith was added which states, "We believe in the verbal plenary inspiration of the scriptures."*

*Constitution and Bylaws amended on January 19, 2003 as follows:*

5. *ARTICLE V - Section 1, the second sentence was deleted. It read, "In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under this constitution of clerk and treasurer."*

6. *ARTICLE V - Section 2, third paragraph, the final two sentences were deleted. They read, "This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. An Elder, other than the senior pastor, shall be elected to one term lasting for a maximum of three years and may only be elected to another term after one year." Also the phrase "the pastor" was deleted from the tenth paragraph.*

7. *ARTICLE V - Section 3, this section was deleted in it's entirety.*

8. *ARTICLE V - Section 4, first paragraph, the final two sentences were deleted. They read, "This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. They shall be elected to one term lasting for a maximum of three years and may only be elected to another term after one year."*

9. *ARTICLE V - Section 5, this section was deleted in it's entirety.*

10. *ARTICLE V - Section 6, this section was deleted in it's entirety.*

11. *ARTICLE VI - ELECTIONS - Section 1, the phrase "after examination by the Elders and the unanimous support thereof" was added to the third paragraph.*

12. *ARTICLE VI - ELECTIONS - Section 2, the wording of this section was revised to the following:*

*Any member of the congregation may present at any time to the Elders nominations for the office of Elder or Deacon. After examining and evaluating the nominee's qualifications a slate of names of any qualified nominees to serve as Elders and/or Deacons shall be presented by the Elders to the church at the previous members' meeting (providing that previous meeting occurred at least two months prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.*

*Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is*

*unqualified for an office should express such concern to the Elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the Elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting.*

*The chairman of the Elders shall declare elected all persons receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast for any office; abstentions shall not be considered as votes cast.*

*Should the needs of the church require Elders other than are available within the church, the Elders may recommend to the church a qualified candidate from outside the church. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential Elder and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the tenets required of Elders as articulated in Article V, Section 2 of this constitution.*

*The previous wording was as follows:*

*The election of officers shall be held at the annual members' meeting of the church. A slate of names of any new nominees to serve as Elders, Deacons, clerk, and treasurer in addition to those presently serving shall be presented by the Elders at the previous members' meeting (providing that previous meeting occurred at least two months prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.*

*The Elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the Elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the Elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting.*

*The chairman of the Elders shall declare elected all persons receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast for any office; abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.*

*The persons elected shall assume their respective offices at the beginning of the fiscal year (unless another date has been specifically designated). Elections to fill any vacancies that may occur during the course of the year may be held at any members' meeting, upon recommendation of the Elders.*

*13. ARTICLE VI - ELECTIONS - Section 3 - Calling of the Senior Pastor, this section in its entirety was deleted. It read, "In the calling of any man to*

*this position, the same basic process of calling an Elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential senior pastor and , before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the tenets required of Elders as articulated in Article V, Section 2 of the constitution. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as senior pastor must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting*