

# **CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH**

## **PREAMBLE**

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to establish a new congregation of believers in this community and to worship and serve God and His Kingdom through this local congregation, this constitution is established to help us implement a biblical model for the local church.

Prayer has been the essential foundation in the establishment and continuance of Grace Community Church and we will continue to rely upon the power of prayer and will continue to encourage all members to pray individually, corporately, and as families for the wisdom, strength, courage, and guidance necessary to live in the world as God's people. Through fervent and effectual prayer, we will retain our focus, build our confidence, and maintain the courage to fulfill our purpose as a local congregation of believers.

It is the intention of Grace Community Church to be faithful in word and deed to the character and mission of the New Testament Church as set forth in the Scriptures. The early church provides the model:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42).

By devoting ourselves to the things that the early church devoted itself to, we are confident that God's purposes will be furthered. The following Biblical Principles of Church Life, gleaned from the example of the early church, have guided our efforts:

- A. Foundational
  - 1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the church's only head. The church exists to know Him and to make Him known, doing whatever He desires as He builds the church in His wisdom and power.
  - 2. The Bible is the only infallible authority for church life. It tells us

accurately what to believe and how to follow Christ.

3. The Lord's purposes for the church involve the glorification of God, the edification of believers and the evangelization of the world. As these are kept in balance, God makes Himself known through the church in truth, holiness, and love.

#### B. Church Activity

1. The essential activities of the church in assembly are teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, prayer, giving, and praising God.
2. Since God's Word is unique in presenting changeless patterns of church life, we must not treat human traditions as if they too were changeless. Where the Bible is not specific nor definitive, the church is to remain flexible and prayerful, evaluating its actions by the goals and principles that God has laid down for the church and by the specific leading of the Holy Spirit for our time and place.

#### C. Ministry

1. All believers are ministers (servants and priests) who have been gifted by God so that they may lovingly build up their brothers and sisters in Christ.
2. Evangelism is the daily calling of all believers as God enables them to share His Gospel with those who do not know Christ. As God enables us to minister compassionately to the physical needs of the hurting, so too will He enable and equip us to minister to their spiritual needs.
3. The basis of ministry is faith. It is "by faith" that God's work is accomplished--not by planning, by organization, or by self-effort. Planning, organization, and individual effort are important, but they must not replace faith and we must remain flexible and easily led by the Holy Spirit.

4. In order to make disciples and build the Kingdom, the church is responsible (under the Lord) to oversee the recognition, training, sending, and supporting of Christian workers the Holy Spirit calls and separates for His special service.

D. Leadership

1. As God supplies biblically-qualified leaders, the church will have men who serve as elders/overseers/pastors. These men will lead the church as they discern the will of Christ through study, mutual exhortation and submission, prayer, and congregational consultation. Other biblically qualified men may be selected to serve the church as deacons, handling practical responsibilities delegated to them by the elders.
2. The elders/overseers/pastors are to shepherd the church as well as equip believers for their various God-appointed ministries. They are to function as "player-coaches" who have as their aim the training and engagement in ministry of individual believers.
3. Preaching and teaching responsibilities should not necessarily be restricted to any one man, but should be shared by all who are gifted in these areas. Teaching elders (vocational pastors) may be called by the church and shall be considered worthy of financial support. Such support will not, however, imply inequality among the elders.

E. Finances

1. We recognize that the church and its members are stewards of God's resources. In financial matters, the church is to emphasize the using of resources for the needs of people and the spread of God's word.

F. Family

1. We recognize that to build a strong church we must build strong family relationships. Growing family relationships are

encouraged, with the primary responsibility for spiritual nurture of children falling to the head of the family. The church should encourage and assist the home and not replace it or compete with it for time and prominence.

2. Single Christians, both young and old, are a vital part of God's family. The church must be able to minister to them in a loving and relevant manner and provide for them a challenging and dynamic place to serve and minister as God enables and leads them.

G. Unity

1. Participation in the membership of the local church is by those who give assurance of personal faith in Christ and who are led by the Holy Spirit to associate with a particular local congregation.
2. The church is to have a oneness of mind, heart, spirit, and purpose in essential matters of belief and practice. In non-essential matters, the church should exercise love and liberty and respect the conscience of individual believers. In all major decisions the elders will seek the consensus of the whole church regarding the will of Christ. Serious attention will be given to making sure that the church remains united and pure, with prayerful application of scriptural standards and sensitive application, where appropriate, of church discipline.

**ARTICLE I  
NAME**

The name of this church is Grace Community Church.

**ARTICLE II  
PURPOSE**

Three basic purposes of Grace Community Church are: (1) worship; (2)

edifying or building up the body; and (3) spreading God's word through teaching, preaching, and missions.

SECTION 1: Grace Community Church is to worship and glorify God. Therefore, we endeavor to conduct our lives in a worshipful way, seeking His pleasure, reflecting His character, and expressing our devotion to Him in word and deed in all that we do.

SECTION 2: Grace Community Church is to edify the body of Christ, that is, to build one another up toward Christ-like maturity. This calls for teaching and studying God's Word, providing examples of holy living, having loving fellowship one with another, encouraging and promoting strong families, equipping and involving every member in ministry, praying and caring for one another, and sharing joys and sorrows.

SECTION 3: Grace Community Church is to spread God's love and His Word world-wide through evangelism and missions. This will be accomplished as God's grace is manifested through our changed lives in all our relationships, showing Christ's compassion by being involved in the lives of people, especially the needy and the suffering, declaring God's good news about Christ to all people, seeking to lead them to personal faith in Him and involvement in His church, and identifying, training, sending, and supporting Christian workers to spread the gospel throughout the world.

### **ARTICLE III DOCTRINE**

The members of Grace Community Church accept and hold the following as the doctrinal foundation for the teaching, preaching, and other ministries of this church:

1. We believe the Bible, in its original languages, is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, and is the final authority for what we believe and how we behave. What God revealed in the autographs (original documents) of the Old and New Testaments, He has, through His providential protection, preserved from corruption during the process of transmission so that the

66 books of the Bible that we have today are the Word of God.

2. We believe there is one God, creator of all things, eternally existent as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- the Holy Trinity;

3. We believe God took on human form in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, performed miracles, was crucified for our sins, was buried, was bodily resurrected, ascended to the right hand of the Father where He now serves as the believer's advocate before the Father, and will come again in power and glory;

4. We believe man was created in the image of God; since the fall of Adam all humans are born sinners unable to make themselves acceptable to God through their own efforts;

5. We believe personal salvation comes when the individual is called by God to repentance and accepts God's salvation by grace through faith in the substitutionary sacrificial death and shed blood of Jesus Christ;

6. We believe that at the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit imparts new life to the believing sinner, baptizes the new believer into the body of Christ, and comes to permanently indwell him. The Holy Spirit guides, instructs, and empowers the believer to live a lifestyle that pleases and glorifies God. He endows believers with spiritual gifts for mutual edification and distinct ministries.

7. We believe "Marriage" is between one man and one woman as established in scripture. Marriage paints a picture of the union between Christ and His Church. It provides the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standard and God's means for procreation.

8. We believe there will be a bodily resurrection of the dead. Those who trusted in Jesus for their salvation will come into full

possession of God's promise of eternal life with Him in heaven, while the unbeliever will be cast into eternal damnation and separation from God.

## **ARTICLE IV POSITIONAL STATEMENT**

We recognize that there are issues over which godly and sincere Christians differ in their understanding of Scripture. In these instances, preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is our highest aim. Therefore, the following represents positions held by all those having responsibility for teaching and oversight in the church. While every member may not agree in complete detail with everything in this section, we ask that no member teach, advocate, or practice a contrary view so as to cause or threaten division in the fellowship.

### SECTION 1. Church Leadership

Scripture contains qualifications for elders and deacons. Perhaps the three most controversial issues of leadership in the modern church deal with (1) the role of women in positions of spiritual authority or leadership, (2) divorce as it relates to the qualifications of elders and deacons, and (3) whether pastoral leadership is singular or plural. Our understanding in these three areas is set out below:

- a. The role of women in positions of spiritual authority or leadership:

In Jesus there is neither "male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:28. Scripture abounds with accounts of faithful women who served God in complete devotion and were used by God to accomplish great things for His kingdom. See, *e.g.*, Esther 4:12-17; Joshua 2; Luke 1:26-38. Thus, gender is irrelevant in our personal

relationship with Jesus Christ or in serving Him and His kingdom in our personal lives. In church leadership, however, we understand Scripture to place ordained leadership and spiritual authority and responsibility on men. The qualifications of elders are all given in the masculine, and so far as we know from Scripture, the elders in the early church were all men. See, e.g., Acts 6:3; I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9. Furthermore, in I Tim. 2:11-15, Paul specifically forbids women from exercising authority over men in the church. Some believe that the Scriptural restriction of church leadership positions to men merely reflects the societal status of women at the time the Scriptures were written and that we no longer need to apply gender qualifications. At the same time the Scripture was imposing gender restrictions on leadership, however, it was also declaring the complete equality of males and females in Christ. Thus, dismissing gender restrictions on leadership as merely a reflection of the culture of the time is not so easily done. In Rom. 16:1 the feminine form of the Greek word translated deacon is used in referring to Phoebe. Some claim that this usage supports the idea of having women serve as deacons. Most modern translations, however, indicate that the usage is descriptive of Phoebe's work and character ("a servant of the church") and is not sanctioning, condoning, or recognizing women as filling the office of deacon in a local congregation. In view of the clear command in I Tim. 2:11-15, as well as the pattern seen throughout the Old and New Testaments, we believe God has placed spiritual authority and responsibility for leading the church upon qualified men and we have adopted it as the position of Grace Community Church. This does not imply that women are somehow unfit, unable, incapable, or have some inherent defect that disqualifies them from service. Galatians 3:28 teaches just the opposite. Rather, it means that God has assigned certain roles to men and other roles to women.

- b. Divorce as it relates to the qualifications of elders and deacons

The interpretations of the phrase "husband of but one wife" in I Tim. 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6 range from prohibiting a polygamist from serving to prohibiting a man who has never been married or who is widowed from serving as an elder or

deacon. While a polygamist would certainly fall within the clear prohibition of this phrase, we do not believe it is limited to just the issue of polygamy. Rather, Paul seems to be addressing the issue of sexual purity. If a man is married and is not living in sexual faithfulness to his wife, he certainly is not qualified to serve as an elder or deacon even though he has "but one" legal wife. On the other hand, we do not think this phrase requires an elder or deacon to be married. If so, Paul would not have been qualified as an elder. We also believe that widowers are not disqualified by this phrase if they are otherwise qualified. Whether a man who has been divorced can serve as an elder will depend upon the circumstances of each case. While divorce was never part of God's original plan, Gen 2:24; Matt. 19:5-8, because of man's sin, however, God permits divorce in two situations: (1) sexual immorality or unfaithfulness (Matt. 5:32; 19:9) and (2) when the non-Christian spouse leaves the marriage (I Cor. 7:15). In each case, however, the elders shall conduct a detailed inquiry to unanimously determine if the divorce and any subsequent remarriage meets biblical standards. While many, if not most, modern divorces and remarriages will not meet biblical standards, we decline to adopt an interpretation of "husband of but one wife" that would disqualify a man from leadership without a thorough individualized application of that leadership qualification.

c. Plurality of church leadership

The New Testament church did not place control or authority in a church in a single pastor. The most common term (used 16 times) for a church leader in the New Testament is "elder." See, e.g., Acts 11:30; 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1. And it is almost always used in the plural. The word translated "pastor" derives from the Greek word *poimen* meaning shepherd and is only used 3 times to refer to an individual leader in the local church. Eph. 4:11; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2. In each of those instances, it is used as a synonym of the more common term "elder." Similarly, the Greek word *episkopos* (overseer) is used 6 times to describe a church leader and is also used synonymously with the more common term elder. See, e.g., Acts

20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7. In view of the Scriptural model of a group of elders being charged with responsibility of overseeing the affairs of a local congregation, we believe that plurality of leadership in a board of elders is the appropriate biblical model. See, e.g., Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5. The traditional modern vocational pastor would serve in the role of "teaching elder." See, e.g., I Tim. 5:17. Thus, while the teaching and preaching function of the modern vocational pastor is clearly found in scripture, we do not believe that the local church is properly governed by a single individual.

## SECTION 2. Baptism

### a. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is experienced by all believers at the moment of salvation. Rom. 8:9-11; Acts 2:38; I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:11-12. It is the act whereby the Holy Spirit seals the believer as an integral part of the Body of Christ. This activity of the Holy Spirit removes the believer from his or her previous position in Adam and places him or her in Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs once in the life of every believer, at the moment of salvation, and is not repeated or deferred until some later point in time. Eph. 4:5. While there is only one baptism of the Holy Spirit, each believer is commanded to be filled with the Spirit and allow the indwelling Spirit to control every aspect of his or her life. Eph. 5:15-21. This is a continuing exercise as the believer grows and matures in Christ and submits daily to the leading, directing, and power of the Holy Spirit.

### b. Water baptism

Over the centuries of church history, various views on the mode, the meaning, and the subjects of water baptism have been held by sincere and well-meaning Christians. The proponents of these various views all rely upon Scripture to support their particular views of water baptism. One clearly discernable truth from Scripture, however, is that water baptism by any mode is not the means of salvation. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. The

ceremony of water baptism is not necessary for, nor is it the means of, salvation. Jesus did, however, submit to John's baptism and He did direct his disciples to baptize those whom they evangelized.

Grace Community Church affirms and administers the ordinance of believer's baptism by immersion as it presents a beautiful testimony and picture of the believer's identification in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also affirm and accept those brothers and sisters from a covenant theological perspective who have been baptized by sprinkling or pouring and who hold the sincere conviction their baptism by such means was biblical.

### SECTION 3. Spiritual gifts

Spiritual gifts are varied and are given by the Holy Spirit sovereignly to all believers (I Cor. 12:11); thus, there is a diversity of gifts within the body of Christ. While the exercise of spiritual gifts can be a sign of spiritual maturity, we do not believe that the receipt of a sign gift (*i.e.*, tongues, healing, prophecy) is a necessary, inevitable, or universal accompaniment of a baptism in, by, or with the Holy Spirit. Nor is the receipt of a sign gift a requirement for spiritual maturity. Because spiritual gifts are given by the Spirit sovereignly to whom He will, not everybody will be given every gift (I Cor. 12: 29,30) and there are no grounds for feelings of inferiority or superiority in this regard.

God heals physically with or without means in answer to prayer offered in faith and in accord with His sovereign will. Further, we are called to pray for one another and that one responsibility of the elders is to pray with and for hurting people. James 5:14-15. Healing cannot, however, be claimed by faith on the same unconditional basis as salvation. If God chooses not to physically heal an ill or injured believer, it is because of His sovereign will. As mere mortals who cannot judge others, we cannot say that the failure to experience a miraculous physical healing is a result of insufficient faith. The new covenant blessing of full and complete healing for all believers

awaits the redemption of our bodies at the return of Christ.

The New Testament miracles done by Christ and certain men who followed Him had a particular significance for that place and time. While our God is a God of miracles and He may and does work such miracles in the world today, we do not believe the absence of a miracle in the life of a believer necessarily indicates the presence of sin, unbelief, or a lack of faith.

#### SECTION 4. Interpretation of Scripture:

Scripture is properly understood only as it relates to the revelation of the person and work of Jesus Christ. In seeking the meaning of a particular passage or text, the Bible is to be interpreted in its normal, usual sense, taking into account the historical, grammatical, theological, and literary context of the passage under study, as the believer is guided by the Holy Spirit. The illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, however, does not change or alter the meaning of Scripture, nor does He give additional revelation of equal or greater authority than the Bible. When believers encounter difficult passages of Scripture that are hard to understand, that do not accord with our individual experience or view of the world, or that seem to contradict other clearer passages of Scripture, the difficulty in interpretation is the result of our human inability to fully grasp the perfect Word of God, not because of some error, failing, or defect in God's Word.

## **ARTICLE V MEMBERSHIP**

### SECTION 1: Becoming a Member

Membership in Grace Community Church shall be open to baptized Christians who give assurance of personal faith in Christ for his or her eternal salvation, who are committed to consistently live under the Lordship of Christ, and who are in agreement with the doctrinal position as set out in Article III.

A prospective member shall acquaint any elder as to his or her desire for membership. At that time, the elder will arrange for the prospective member to attend the new members orientation. After completing the orientation and giving testimony to the elders of having met the qualifications, and upon being baptized if he or she had not previously received Christian baptism, he or she will be presented to the congregation and added to the membership roll of Grace Community Church.

## SECTION 2: Responsibilities of Membership

Scripture places a high importance upon the believer's participation in the life of a local assembly in order to grow and mature in Christ. Members of Grace Community Church, relying upon prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives and not through their own strength, seek to fulfill this biblical command by:

a. Participation: Members have the responsibility to participate regularly in the worship and Bible study opportunities offered by the church. Heb. 10:24-25. Participation in church sponsored worship and Bible study, however, is not a substitute for individual and family devotions, Bible study, and quiet time with the Lord. Members also have the responsibility to participate in supporting the church financially through their tithes and offerings. I Cor. 9:13-14; II Cor. 9:10-12.

b. Submission: Members have the responsibility to esteem and follow the leaders of the church as God has instructed, so long as that leadership is following Christ. Heb. 13:17. Members also have the responsibility to submit to guidance, instruction, and, if they should fall into serious moral disobedience or serious doctrinal error, the discipline of God through His church. Matt. 18:15-20

c. Ministry: Members have the responsibility to serve the body by using the gifts and abilities God has given them for the good of the body, so that the body can mature. 1 Pet. 4:10.

d. Purity: Members have the responsibility to live daily under the Lordship of Christ as revealed in a lifestyle characterized by holiness before God and integrity before the world so that Christ's name may not be dishonored. Col. 1:9-10; 1 Pet. 2:12.

e. Unity: Members have the responsibility to love the church, for which Christ died, to promote unity and fellowship within the church family as a visible demonstration to a watching world that God changes the selfish hearts of men and women who are made new in Christ. Phil. 2:1-2.

### SECTION 3: Termination of Membership

a. By Letter: Letters of recommendation to other churches may be granted by this church for members in good standing. When letters are granted, the member's name will be removed from the church roll and membership in this church will terminate.

b. By Request: Upon a member's request, his or her name shall be removed from the membership roll and membership in this church will terminate.

c. By Joining Another Church: Upon receiving reliable evidence that a member has joined another church, the member's name shall be removed from the membership roll and membership in this church will terminate.

d. By Absence for One Year: Members who move away from the community or who otherwise absent themselves from participation in the activities of the church for 1 year will be deemed to have voluntarily withdrawn their membership.

e. **By Failing to Participate:** Members who have been an infrequent participant in the activities of the church for a significant period of time will be contacted by the elders to ascertain the circumstances. Infrequent participation in the life and service of the church for reasons other than illness, vacations, work, etc., shall prompt an informal inquiry by the elders as to the member's commitment to the health and welfare of the church. Where such infrequent participation is determined by the elders to be the result of spiritual neglect and indifference, loving restoration shall be attempted by the elders. Where such an attempt is not successful, withdrawal of membership may be effected by the unanimous agreement of the elders.

f. **By Removal Under Discipline:** Members of the church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are expected to conduct their lives in accordance with biblical standards of holiness as they grow to become like Christ. When a member knowingly and unrepentantly ignores the direct commands and prohibitions of scripture, the principles of restoration and discipline found in such passages as Matthew 18, Galatians 6, 2 Thess. 3, I Cor. 5, Matt. 7:1-5 shall be lovingly applied under the guidance of the elders. Members of the early church were subject to confrontation for reasons such as: unwillingness to become reconciled to an offended brother (Matt. 18:15-17), unwillingness to engage in work (2 Thess. 3:6-15), divisiveness in the church (Rom. 16:17,18; Tit. 3:9,10), sexual immorality (I Cor. 5:1-13), false teaching (I Tim. 1:20, 2 Tim. 2: 17-18), and general sinful conduct (Gal. 6:1). When such action leads to the regrettable obligation of terminating a person from membership, this will be based upon the unanimous agreement of the elders.

## **ARTICLE VI GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND OFFICERS**

Grace Community Church is an inter-denominational congregation of believers. While affirming the privileges and spiritual duties of fellowship

and ministry with all believers, Grace Community Church shall not be accountable to any other ecclesiastical or denominational body. Final authority over the ministry and witness, as well as the property, of this church shall be retained by the members acting in accord with the procedures and through the leadership as set forth in this Constitution.

#### SECTION 1: The Chief Shepherd

Jesus Christ, God's Son, is the sole Head of Grace Community Church, the Leader before whom all merely human leaders must bow (Eph. 1:22,23; Matt. 23:8-11; 1 Pet. 5:4). He communicates His will for the church through His word, the Bible. He gives additional guidance by means of the specific leading of the Holy Spirit who indwells the heart of each believer. He also shepherds the flock by gifting the church with under-shepherds who are commissioned, under His leadership, with the task of equipping the flock for its full functioning (Eph. 4:7-16). In a real sense, Grace Community Church belongs to Him; He has taken the responsibility for ordering the life of the church so that He may someday present it to Himself glorious, without any spot or wrinkle that would detract from Heaven's beauty (Eph. 5:25-27).

#### SECTION 2: Under-shepherds (also called elders, overseers, and pastors)

##### a. Qualifications

The elders are a group of biblically qualified men who are charged with leading the Church under the leadership of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. God raises up and selects men to be elders; the church recognizes God's calling through the confirmation/affirmation process described in 3., below. The Senior Pastor shall be a member of the Board of Elders by virtue of his position and shall serve in the role of teaching elder.

The biblical qualifications for this office are set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; and 1 Peter 5:2-3.

Husband of one wife	Temperate
Sensible	Respectable
Hospitable	Managing his own household well
Just	

Able to teach and defend  
right doctrine  
Not self-willed  
Not pugnacious  
Well respected by  
unbelievers  
Devout

Not addicted to wine  
Gentle  
Not quick tempered  
Not a lover of money  
Humble  
Mature in Christ  
Loving what is good

## b. Responsibilities

The elders are responsible for the general oversight of all matters pertaining to the work of the church. Their function is to establish policy and monitor the operations and ministries of the church. The elders shall report to the congregation on a quarterly basis the affairs and status of the church and its ministries. The specific responsibilities of the elders are:

### (1). Ministry of the Word

- (a) Teaching and Exhorting - 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9, Ephesians 4:12.
- (b) Equipping and Training - Ephesians 4:11-12.
- (c) Deciding on Theological Issues - Acts 15:6.
- (d) Refuting False Doctrine - Acts 20:28-31, Titus 1:9,11.

### (2). Shepherding the Flock

- (a) Praying for the Sick - James 5:14-15.
- (b) Correction and Discipline - 1 Thes. 5:12; Titus 2:15; Hebrews 13:17.
- (c) Exhorting in Sound Doctrine - Titus 1:9.
- (d) Setting an Example - 1 Peter 5:3, Acts 20:18-21.

(3). General Oversight of the Church

(a) Managing the Affairs of the Church - 1 Timothy 3:5, 5:17.

(b) Directing through Decision-Making - 1 Timothy 5:17.

c. Term

An elder shall serve so long as he is a member, in good standing, of Grace Community Church and biblically qualified for such service, or until he resigns from the Board of Elders. An elder may request a sabbatical of one year or longer. Upon expiration of the sabbatical, the elder may resume his service on the Board of Elders if he is biblically qualified for such service. The Senior Pastor (teaching elder) is a member of the Board of Elders by virtue of his position.

d. Number

The minimum number of elders shall be five. The number of elders shall be determined by the serving elders according to need and the availability of qualified men. The Senior Pastor (teaching elder) shall serve as a voting member of the Board of Elders in addition to the minimum number of five provided for in this section.

e. Selection

Selections will take place annually, and at other times when the serving elders determine that new or additional elders are needed.

(1). Notice of the beginning of the selection process shall be given in writing to the membership. Members shall prayerfully consider the qualifications of the male members eligible for the office of elder and submit their recommendations to any of the serving elders. Members shall have at least two weeks from the date of notice of the beginning of the selection process to submit their recommendations.

(2). The serving elders shall prayerfully consider the men recommended by the members. Upon unanimous agreement among the serving elders that a man meets all of the biblical qualifications for eldership, the elders will contact the candidate(s) to determine each man's assessment of God's will for him in this matter.

(3). The elders shall then present to the congregation for consideration the name of those men whom the elders agree possess the biblical qualifications for office, who have agreed to serve as elder under the Lord's direction if subsequently confirmed by the church, and whom the elders unanimously agree should be confirmed for service.

(4). The members shall then have two weeks within which to prayerfully consider those the elders have recommended. During this time, members should talk with the men under consideration to personally acquaint themselves with the man's spiritual qualifications if they are not already familiar with his qualifications. Should members have reservations about a man's qualifications for elder, they should discuss those reservations with the individual and, if not satisfactorily resolved, bring the matter to the attention of the elders. Members shall express their views on the recommended candidate by completing the Elder Confirmation Form attached as Appendix A.

(5). After receiving Elder Confirmation Forms from members, the elders shall meet again to review the qualifications of those submitted for confirmation. If a review of the Elder Confirmation Forms reveals a consensus of the church confirming the man or men the elders have recommended and if the elders are still unanimous in their support, the man or men so confirmed will be reported to the church as having been duly confirmed to the office of elder. Should the result of the confirmation process reveal there is a lack of either a consensus in the church or a lack of unanimity among the elders, the selection process shall begin anew.

(6). Upon affirmation by consensus of the congregation and after prayer, the new elder will be confirmed for service before the Lord by the laying on of hands of the elders in the presence of the congregation and will begin serving at that time.

f. Committees

The Elders may establish and appoint the membership of such committees as they determine are necessary to properly administer the affairs of the church.

g. General

Non-serving elders are a resource to be called upon as needed for help and counsel by the Church.

h. Officers

The Board of Elders shall elect a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary of the Board. The Board of Elders shall serve as a Board of Directors or a governing body for purposes of state laws governing religious corporations or unincorporated associations. In their capacity as Directors, they shall have the duties and responsibilities attendant to Directors under state law, subject to the express limits and reservations set forth in this constitution.

i. Removal

An elder may be removed from office prior to the expiration of his term if the remaining elders unanimously agree that he no longer satisfies the biblical qualifications for eldership. Any such removal will be accomplished only after the subject elder is given notice and an opportunity to defend his qualifications before the Board of Elders.

j. Meetings of the Elders

Elders will meet regularly for study, prayer, and oversight of the

church. Unanimous agreement among the elders is required in those instances specified in this constitution. In all other matters, unanimity is the goal and will be sought in a spirit of mutual submission. In the unlikely event an elder has a personal interest in the outcome of some matter before the Board of Elders, e.g., when a decision may effect the financial interest of the elder or if an elder is subject to discipline, the elder so effected shall abstain from the consideration of the matter and shall not be counted in determining whether the elders have reached either a unanimous agreement or a majority decision.

### SECTION 3: Deacons

#### a. Duties

The elders will be assisted by deacons in the specific ministries of the church. Every deacon is to be involved in conducting a specific area of service in the church, under the direction of the Lord and the supervision of the elders. Although the deacons shall individually advise the elders as to decisions which affect the life and ministry of the church in their area of responsibility, the office of deacon is not considered as administrative, nor is the group of deacons to be consider a board of some kind.

#### b. Qualifications

Deacons are to be men of a high level of spiritual maturity, who display the qualities mentioned in I Tim. 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6.

Dignified  
Not addicted to wine  
Holding his faith with a clear conscience  
Managing well his children and household  
Full of the Spirit and wisdom

Not double-tongued  
Not fond of sordid gain  
Husband of one wife  
Of good reputation

c. Term

Deacons shall serve a term according to the specific demands of the service for which they were recognized after which they shall be available for other ministries as needs arise and as long as they continue to qualify. Ordinarily, a deacon will be expected to serve a period of three years or until the service area for which he is responsible terminates, whichever is sooner. A deacon may serve consecutive terms in either the same service area or in another service area. A man will not be considered a deacon if not actively serving in that capacity even though he might have been one at some time in the past. Because each deacon will have a specific service area, there will be no deacons without a service or ministry area. Thus, the number of deacons will change from time to time as the needs and ministries of the church change. The elders will periodically review the various ministry areas and needs of the church to evaluate the effectiveness of ministry.

d. Selection

The selection process used to select elders will be followed to select deacons.

SECTION 4: Clerk

The Clerk shall be elected annually by the church. It shall be the Clerk's duties to attend or be represented at all Church business meetings. The Clerk shall keep an accurate record of all business conducted at such meetings and shall maintain an accurate roll of the church membership. The Clerk shall be a member in good standing of Grace Community Church. The elders shall seek nominations for Clerk from the congregation and shall contact those nominated to determine their qualifications and willingness to serve if elected. Those qualified nominees who are willing to serve shall be placed before the congregation for election.

SECTION 5: Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be elected annually by the church. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to receive, keep in a bank, and disburse by check upon proper authority all monies committed to the church. The Treasurer shall be responsible at all times for an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements. The Treasurer shall see that an accurate account is rendered to the church regularly. All books, records, and accounts kept by the Treasurer shall be the property of the church and may be audited as directed by the Board of Elders. The Treasurer shall be a member in good standing of Grace Community Church. The elders shall seek nominations for Treasurer from the congregation and shall contact those nominated to determine their qualifications and willingness to serve if elected. Those qualified nominees who are willing to serve shall be placed before the congregation for election.

SECTION 6: Teachers, Committee Chairs, and other positions

The elders shall arrange for the selection and appointment of Sunday School and Bible teachers, Committee chairs, and other positions needed to properly administer the affairs of the church. Sunday School teachers and Committee Chairs shall be members in good standing of Grace Community Church.

**ARTICLE VII  
PASTORAL STAFF**

SECTION 1: General

As the church grows, as its needs dictate, and as its resources are sufficient, the congregation may call ordained vocational pastoral staff to assist in equipping the body for ministry and service.

## SECTION 2: Procedure for call

- a. When the elders determine the need and resources of the church are present to call a pastoral staff member, they shall present the matter to the congregation to determine the consensus of the church.
- b. Upon a consensus supporting the call of a pastoral staff member, the elders shall request nominations from the congregation for members to serve on a pastoral staff screening committee, which shall have the primary task of prayerfully searching for candidates, screening applicants for the Scriptural qualifications set out in Article V, Section 2 of this Constitution, determining the best qualified for the particular needs of the church, and recommending a candidate to the elders. The congregation shall have two weeks within which to make their nominations. Upon receipt of nominations from the congregation, the elders shall prayerfully consider the nominations submitted and unanimously agree upon a pastoral staff screening committee of at least 5 members who have agreed to serve. This committee slate will then be presented to the congregation for confirmation.
- c. Upon receiving a recommendation from the Screening Committee, the elders shall review the recommendation, interview the applicant, and satisfy themselves of both his Scriptural, personal, and professional qualifications for the particular needs of the church. If the elders are unanimous in their satisfaction with the candidate's qualifications and prayerfully conclude that he should be considered further, they shall arrange for one or more visits and speaking opportunities for the candidate with the congregation.
- d. After hosting the visits and/or speaking opportunities, if the elders are still unanimous in their determination that the candidate meets the Scriptural, personal, and professional qualifications and they have the firm conviction that the candidate under consideration is God's choice for Grace Community Church, they shall present the candidate to the church and seek the consensus of the congregation.
- e. Upon determining that a consensus exists to extend a call to the

candidate, the elders shall so notify the candidate and, if the call is accepted, arrange for the candidate to join the fellowship and assume his duties.

### SECTION 3: Removal of pastoral staff

Removal of a member of the pastoral staff requires the unanimous action of the Board of Elders after prayerful application of the principles of Matthew 18 and after providing the staff member notice and an opportunity to be heard before the Board of Elders. Ordinarily, removal shall take effect on the date of the action by the Board of Elders, however, unless stipulated otherwise by the effected member of the pastoral staff and the Board of Elders, pay and benefits shall continue for 30 days after the date of removal.

## **ARTICLE VIII CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

### SECTION 1: Meetings of the Membership

- a. Annual Meeting: The membership shall meet at least annually, usually during the month of October, for the purpose of evaluating the progress of the church toward its stated purposes and at other times as needs arise. Notice of the date, time, and place of the annual meeting shall be given at least two weeks in advance.
- b. Called Meeting: Called meetings may be at the direction of the Board of Elders or by a request of 10% of the membership. Notice of the date, time, place and purpose of a called meeting, provided at least two weeks in advance, shall be given through announcement at Sunday morning worship or through a letter to the resident membership.
- c. Emergency Meeting: In the case of an emergency, and upon the unanimous agreement of the elders, a called meeting may be held solely for the purpose of taking such action as is required by the emergency. Every effort shall be taken to advise the membership, and

where possible the meeting shall be held in conjunction with a Sunday morning service. No action under this provision may be taken in regard to staff removal, the sale or purchase of real property, or the calling of pastoral staff.

d. Quorum: A quorum shall consist of those members who are present at the date, time, and place announced for the meeting. All major decisions will be brought before the church for confirmation upon unanimous recommendation from the elders after two week's notice; full agreement by all such members of the congregation shall be prayerfully sought, although as low as 75% may be regarded as meeting the requirement for a consensus. Matters will continue as before until a consensus decision can be reached under the direction of the elders. A form for determining whether a consensus exists is at Appendix B. This form may be used in every instance where a formal polling of the congregation is necessary to determine the existence of a consensus.

"Major decisions" requiring consensus shall include the calling of pastoral staff, the approval of an annual budget, the acquisition or disposition of real property, and the expenditure of unbudgeted funds in excess of \$1000.

e. All business meetings shall be conducted in general accord with Robert's Rules of Order, except that the moderator may, in the absence of objection or by consent of the majority, deviate from the rules in the interests of efficiency, Christian fellowship, and justice.

f. The Chairman of the Board of Elders shall preside as moderator at all business meetings or shall designate someone to preside in his place.

## **ARTICLE IX AMENDMENT**

This constitution may be amended by a 3/4 vote of the members present and voting at the annual or a called meeting of the congregation. Members shall have at least 14 days notice of any proposed amendments prior to any meeting where such amendment will be presented for adoption.

**ARTICLE X**  
**INITIAL BOARD OF ELDERS**

Upon adoption of this constitution, the men serving as the Church Council shall be the initial Board of Elders with all of the authority, duties, and responsibilities provided herein. This initial Board of Elders shall receive members and shall initiate the process to call a Board of Elders as provided by this constitution within 6 months of the adoption of this constitution; provided, however, the provision of Article VI, Section 2, para. 3, prohibiting elders from succeeding themselves after completion of their term shall not apply to the initial Board of Elders.

Subsection c of Section 2 under Article VI. of the Grace Community Church Constitution is amended to read as follows:

c. Term (amended Feb. 2009)

An elder shall serve so long as he is a member, in good standing, of Grace Community Church and biblically qualified for such service, or until he resigns from the Board of Elders. An elder may request a sabbatical of one year or longer. Upon expiration of the sabbatical, the elder may resume his service on the Board of Elders if he is biblically qualified for such service. The Senior Pastor (teaching elder) is a member of the Board of Elders by virtue of his position.

APPENDIX A  
Elder Confirmation Form

The Elders of Grace Community Church submit \_\_\_\_\_ to the congregation for confirmation as an elder.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have prayerfully considered the selection of the above individual as an elder and I confirm him in that calling.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not understand or know God's will in this matter. I will, however, support the Elders' recommendation in this matter.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have prayerfully considered the Elders' recommendation and cannot confirm it as God's with a sense of peace of confidence. I will personally contact an Elder and discuss my reasons and reservations.

APPENDIX B  
Consensus Confirmation Form

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ELDERS: After prayerful study and deliberation, the Elders recommends that . . . .

\_\_\_\_\_ I have prayerfully considered the Elders' recommendation and I confirm that recommendation as God's will for our church.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not understand or know God's will in this matter. I will, however, support the Elders' recommendation in this matter.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have prayerfully considered the Elders' recommendation and cannot confirm it as God's will for our church with a sense of peace of confidence. I will personally contact an Elder and discuss my reasons and reservations.