



[CONSTITUTION]



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Article 1

The name of our church shall be Grace Community Church.

Article 11

Doctrine

1. We believe the Holy Bible, consisting of all the books of the Old and New Testaments, is the divinely inspired Word of God. It is the revelation of God's will and plan for mankind, and is without error or misstatement in its moral and spiritual teachings and in its recording of historical and scientific facts. The Bible was originally given to man by God through plenary, verbal inspiration, without error or defect of any kind. God has ordained the Bible to be our final authority in questions relating to our faith, our teaching and our conduct. (Psalms 119.89 & 160; Proverbs 30.5; Isaiah 40.8; 2 Timothy 3.16 and 2 Peter 1.21)
2. We believe in one God who is the creator, governor and sustainer of all things. We believe He is the infinite and perfect Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being. We believe God is rational, personal and eternal in His being. He exists in the form of a perfect unity revealed to us in the Bible as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We see and understand the character of God through the revelation of Scripture. Thus, we know God is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, holy, righteous, just, benevolent and kind. We also know through the revelation of Scripture that He is filled with love, truth, grace and mercy. In all these things, He is immutable. (Genesis 1.1; John 4.24, John 5.26; Isaiah 45.5; Hebrews 6.17; Genesis 21.33; Psalms 90.2, Psalms 139.7-12; Romans 10.6-8; Jeremiah 23.23-25; Psalms 147.5; Job 42.2; Jeremiah 32.17 & 27; James 1.17; Malachi 3.6; Leviticus 11.44; 1 Peter 1.15; Psalms 89.14; Mark 10.18; 1 John 4.8 & 16; Psalms 145.9; Matthew 5.45; Ephesians 2.4; James 5.11; Titus 2.11; 1 Peter 5.10; 1 John 5.20 and Romans 3.4)
3. We believe Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior and the long awaited Messiah of Israel. We believe the Scriptures teach that Jesus eternally co-existed with God, the Father and God, the Holy Spirit as the second Person of the Trinity. In the fullness of time, He was begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. Upon His birth, our Lord became a perfect man, yet, at the same time, He was perfect God. He was, in fact, God incarnate. Thus, He possesses all the attributes of God. We believe Jesus was sinless by nature and completely free of sin in His thoughts, His words, and His deeds throughout His life here on earth. He died for our sins on a Roman cross and then, physically rose from the dead on the third day after His crucifixion. After being seen by a multitude of witnesses, Jesus ascended back up into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of God, ever making intercession for us. We believe Jesus now awaits that time when He shall return to catch us up to be with Himself forevermore. (Isaiah 7.14; Matthew 1.20; Luke 1.34 & 35; John 3.16; John 1.1, 12, 14, John 14.9; Isaiah 9.5 & 6; Titus 2.13; Hebrews 1.8; Acts 20.28; 1 Corinthians 1.30; Hebrews 7.25; Acts 4.12 and Hebrews 10.37)

4. We believe the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. He is a personal being and He possesses all the divine attributes of God. The Holy Spirit's primary responsibilities today are to: convict the world of sin, to be a comforter to the children of God, to help us pray, to lead us into all truth, and to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ. His work in the life of each individual believer consists of: baptizing the believer into the body of Christ and indwelling the believer at the moment of regeneration, filling the believer on a daily basis as the believer yields his or her heart and mind to Christ, and empowering the believer for a Christian walk and service. (John 15.7-15; Acts 5.3; 1 Corinthians 12.13; Romans 8.9; Ephesians 5.18, 3.16; Acts 1.8; Galatians 5.22 & 23; John 3.5; Titus 3.5; 2 Thessalonians 2.13 and Matthew 28.19)
5. We believe man was created in the image of God according to the Genesis account of creation. We believe all mankind fell in the fall of Adam and, thereby, incurred not only physical death, but spiritual death as well. Since the fall of Adam, all human beings (with the exception of our Lord Jesus Christ) have been born with a sin nature. This nature reveals itself in the thoughts, the words and the deeds of mankind. Thus, all men are lost and alienated from God until they are born again by accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. (Genesis 1.26 & 27, 3.1-8; 1 Timothy 2.13 & 14; Romans 5.12-19; 3.23; 6.23, 10.9 & 10; 1 Corinthians 15.21 & 22; Psalms 51.5 and Titus 3.3 & 4)
6. We believe the blood of Christ shed at Calvary is the only antidote for sin. We believe our Lord Jesus Christ laid down His life on the cross as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. We believe it is by God's grace alone that man receives and accepts God's free gift of salvation. Good works cannot and do not play any part in God's great plan of salvation. This great gift is freely given to us by God and can only be accepted by faith in the substitutionary death, burial and physical resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe those who steadfastly refuse to accept Christ's provision for the penalty of their sin are destined to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire commonly known as Hell. They will be raised from the dead at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ, judged at the Great White Throne Judgment, and cast into the Lake of Fire. They will exist there in a state of conscious, unutterable torment throughout eternity without any chance of ever being redeemed.

We believe those who accept God's free gift of salvation become the children of God. Their sins are forgiven and they receive eternal life, becoming heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. At the return of Christ for His church, they will be physically raised from the grave (if they have died) or, if they are still alive, they will be caught up in the air, and transformed into the likeness of Christ in His glorified body. We believe once a person has been saved, he or she is eternally secure in Christ, so he or she cannot and will not ever be lost. (Luke 22.20; Acts 4.12; Galatians 2.16; Ephesians 2.8 & 9, 1.7; John 14.6; Romans 3.24, 25, 5.9; Hebrews 9.12-14; 1 John 1.7) On the subject of eternal punishment: Matthew 25.30-46, 13:30-50; Mark 9.48; Luke 16.22-28; 2 Thessalonians 1.9 and Revelation 14.10, 11, 20.11-15, 21.8. On the position of the believer: Romans 8.1-3, 16.2, 8:29, 30, 35, 38, 39; 11.29; 2 Corinthians 5.15; Galatians 3.26; 1 Corinthians 15.35-55; 1 Thessalonians 4.16-18; John 10.27-30; Philippians 1.6 and 1 Peter 1.5.

7. We believe in one true, universal and invisible church. This church is called the body and bride of Christ in the Scriptures. It is made up of all true believers in this present age. We believe the local church is the local expression of the universal church. It is a voluntary association of baptized believers who are equal in rank and privilege, subject to the Word of God. We believe that while a local church may enter into fellowship with other believers through Associations, Fellowships or Conventions, it still remains independent of all external ecclesiastical control whatsoever. (1 Peter 1.3, 22-25; 1 Corinthians 12.13; Ephesians 5.26 & 27; 1.22 & 23; Colossians 1.18; 2 Corinthians 11.2 & 3; Hebrews 12.23; Revelation 19.7. The local church: Acts 8.1; 13.1; 1 Corinthians 1.2; Galatians 1.2; Colossians 4.16; Matthew 13.24-30, 36-43.)
8. We believe the Scriptures clearly command every believer to be baptized by immersion in water. Although baptism has no saving merit, it does show forth in solemn and beautiful symbolism the believer's faith in and union with the crucified, buried and risen Savior. (Matthew 28.19 & 20; Mark 16.16; Romans 6.3 & 4; Acts 2.38; 8.12, 13, 36, 38; 9.18; 10.47 & 48; 16.15 & 33; 18.8; 19.5 and Colossians 2.12)
9. We believe Christ gave us "The Lord's Supper" as an ordinance to symbolize His broken body and shed blood for our sins. We believe the celebration of Communion by the bread and the cup should be limited to only those who have placed their trust in Christ as their personal Savior, and then, only after careful self-examination. (Matthew 26.26-30; Mark 14.22-26; Luke 22.17-20 and 1 Corinthians 11.23-31)
10. We believe the Christian life should be a life of righteousness, good works, and separation unto God from the evil ways of the world, manifested by speaking the truth in love, maintaining the sanctity of the home, settling differences between Christians in accordance to the Word of God, not engaging in carnal strife, but showing a Christ-like attitude toward all men, exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit, and maintaining a life of prayer, including the privilege, when sick, of calling for the elders of the church to pray and to anoint with oil in the name of the Lord. (Ephesians 2.10; 4.15, 22, 24, 26, 32; Galatians 5.22, 23-25; Philippians 2.15, 4.6, 8; 2 Timothy 2.19 & 22; 1 Peter 2.5, 9; 4.1 & 2; 1 John 2.6 & 15; 3.2 & 3; 4.7; 1 Corinthians 6.1-8, 2 Corinthians 6.17; James 5.14 & 15; 1 Thessalonians 5.17 & 18 and Colossians 3.1 & 2, 12-17)
11. We believe in the existence of Satan. We believe the Scriptures clearly teach that he is a created being who willfully fell from the love and grace of God. He is now the great adversary of God, of the nation of Israel, and of the children of God. The Bible teaches that he will one day be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire (Hell) where he will be kept for eternity. (Genesis 3.1-15; 1 Chronicles 21.1; Job 1.6-12; 2.1-7; Zechariah 3.1 & 2; Matthew 4.1-11; Luke 10.18 & 19; John 13.2 & 27; 1 Peter 5.8 and Revelation 12.1-4, 20. 1-3, 7-10)
12. Future Things. We believe in the personal, physical, visible, and imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe the Scriptures teach that He will return with the angels of glory to gather those who have placed their trust in Him from the four corners of the earth. We believe the world will experience seven years of tribulation prior to the Second Coming of Christ. When

Christ returns, He will establish His rule upon this earth for one thousand years, sitting upon the throne of David in Jerusalem. During this time, Satan will be held captive in the Great Abyss spoken of in Revelation 20.1-3. We believe our Lord's reign of peace upon this earth will be ended when Satan is released from the Great Abyss and leads mankind in one last rebellion against God and His Kingdom. This rebellion will be quickly put down and the Great White Throne Judgment will be established. Satan, his angels, demons and the lost of all ages will be judged before this throne and cast into the eternal Lake of Fire. Following the Great White Throne Judgment, God will create a new heaven and new earth to be enjoyed by all His saints for eternity. (Matthew 24.27 & 36, Acts 1.7-10, Titus 2.13, 1 Corinthians 15.50-55, 1 Thessalonians 4.16-18. The Tribulation: Zephaniah 1.14-18; Jeremiah 30.4-7; Matthew 24.21-29; Luke 21.34-36; 2 Thessalonians 2.7-12; Revelation chapters 6-18. The Millennial Reign of Christ: Psalms chapter 2, 2 Samuel 7.8-17; Psalms 89.3 & 4, 20-37; Jeremiah 33.19-26; Luke 1.31-33; Isaiah 9.6 & 7; 11.1-9; Zechariah 8.22 & 23; 9.10. The Great Abyss: Revelation 20.1-10. The Great White Throne Judgment: Revelation 20.11-15. The New Heaven and New Earth: Revelation 21.1-22.5).

13. This doctrinal statement may not be changed in any way.

Article III

Our Covenant of Fellowship

1. Having been led by God and the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord, and
2. Desiring to unite in worship, fellowship, and testimony of that portion of Christ's body known as Grace Community Church, and
3. Having read Grace Community Church's doctrinal statement and fully concurring therein, and understanding it to be the basis of Grace Community Church's teaching,
I _____, do hereby express my desire to enter into the following covenant with my brothers and sisters in Christ in this fellowship.

By the grace of God and the help of the Holy Spirit, I covenant:

- a. To walk together in Christian love (1 John 3.14).
- b. To exercise Christian care and watchfulness over one another (Galatians 6.1-10, and Romans 12.10). To be subject to the counsel of others (1 Peter 5.5) according to the precepts of the Word of God (2 Timothy 3.16).
- c. To pray for one another, sharing burdens, sorrows and joys (James 5.16 and Galatians 6.2).

- d. To be thoughtful and courteous to one another, to be slow to take offense, and to be quick to forgive and to seek forgiveness (Ephesians 4.31 & 32).
- e. To guard the spiritual purity, peace and prosperity of the church and its growth in Scriptural knowledge and godliness (Ephesians 4.11-16; 1 Timothy 4.12-16 and Jude 1.3 & 4).
- f. To assist, as the Lord enables me, in the ministry of Grace Community Church, and to promote its witness to the saving grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ (John 15.8 & 16; 20.21b and 1 Corinthians 12.7, 20 & 27).
- g. To contribute, as the Lord enables me, to the financial support of Grace Community Church, and to the relief of the needy, and the evangelization of all people (1 Corinthians 16.2; 2 Corinthians 9.7).
- h. To love and to pray for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 6.18).
- i. To engage regularly in personal Bible study and prayer (Psalms 119.97 & 105 and Acts 17.11).
- j. To bring up the children that the Lord entrusts to my care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6.1-4; Colossians 3.20 and 2 Timothy 3.14 & 15).
- k. To walk circumspectly in the world, to provide things honest in the sight of all men, to be faithful in engagements, exemplary in deportment, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts (1 Peter 2.11).
- l. To endeavor, by example, by word, and by prayer to win others to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (John 4.34 & 35 and Romans 9.1-3; 10.1).
- m. To remember those who are under-shepherds over us, who speak the Word of God to us, and to submit to the loving oversight and discipline of the elders and the members of this church of Christ (Hebrews 13.7; 1 Corinthians 16.15 & 16; 1 Peter 5.5; Ephesians 5.21; 2 Thessalonians 3.14 & 15; 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2.6-9).

Article IV

Additional Doctrines of Grace Community Church

Although members of Grace Community Church are not asked to confess the following doctrines in order to become members of the church, these doctrines will represent the official position of Grace Community Church and shall be taught from the pulpit and within the structure of our Christian Education program.

1. We believe the Scriptures teach a Pre-tribulational Rapture of the church in which every born-again Christian will be caught up to be with Christ before the coming of The Tribulation upon the earth. We believe the purpose of the Rapture is to remove born-again believers from this world before God pours out His wrath upon the earth. The Scriptures clearly teach that we are not children of His wrath and they just as clearly teach that the Tribulation is a time of outpouring of His wrath.

We do not believe, however, that the teaching of a Pre-tribulational Rapture should be used to deny the possibility that the church may experience severe suffering in this present age at the hands of Satan or the children of this world. Christ clearly taught, "In the world you have tribulation" (John 16.33). We believe the grace of God is sufficient to sustain the child of God through the sufferings and trials of this life. Thus, while preaching and teaching a Pre-tribulational Rapture of the church, we are also committed to teaching born-again Christians to be mature in Christ, prepared to pay the price for our witness of His saving grace and His coming kingdom. (The Tribulation described as the outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth: Zephaniah 1.14-18; Matthew 24.21 & 22 and Revelation 6.17. Born-again believers are not the children of wrath: 1 Thessalonians 4.9; 1.10; Revelation 3.10. Rapture text: 1 Thessalonians 5.16-18.)

2. We believe it is the perfect will of God that marriages never be dissolved in the courts of men by divorce. We recognize, however, the reality of life as taught in the Scriptures that human beings are not perfect and frequently fall short of God's perfect plan for their lives.

Thus, as we study Scripture, we find two causes for which God allows divorce and remarriage: 1) Abandonment by an unsaved partner due to the commitment made to Christ by a new believer (1 Corinthians 7.12-14) and, 2) Sexual immorality (Matthew 5.31 & 32; 19.7). In the event a Christian has been offended by the unfaithfulness of their partner, we encourage the principle of forgiveness and reconciliation, rather than divorce as the preferred remedy.

We believe those who have been divorced and remarried before they became born again believers are not walking in sin because they have become "new creations" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5.17).

In those cases where born again Christians have divorced and remarried without biblically justifiable grounds, we believe they can and will be restored to fellowship with God and their brothers

and sisters in Christ upon the confession of their sin, like the confession of any other sin (1 John 1.9). This belief is not intended to deny the fact that there are painful consequences as a natural by-product of divorce and remarriage. It merely reflects our belief in regard to one's fellowship with God and His church following divorce and remarriage.

We also believe the Word of God clearly sets limited restrictions upon divorced and remarried people in regard to service within the church. Specifically, the Scriptures teach that divorce and remarriage disqualifies the individual from serving as a deacon or elder in the church (1 Timothy 3.2 & 12, Titus 1.6). We do not believe these limitations are placed upon those who have been divorced and remarried prior to becoming born again Christians since they are "new creations" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5.17).

We believe it is wrong to place any limitations upon those who have been divorced and remarried other than those that are specifically mentioned in the Bible.

Above all else, we believe that people who have experienced the pain of a broken marriage need our love, our comfort, our understanding, and our fellowship as brothers and sisters in Christ. We believe God has not put us here to judge or to condemn, but to minister and serve with hearts filled with love and genuine concern for the suffering of others.

3. We believe every born again Christian is a Spirit-filled child of God. We believe all Christians are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ at the moment they are saved (Eph. 4.5, 1 Cor. 12.13). We also believe there are many fillings of the Holy Spirit as the Christian walks with Christ day by day throughout his or her life (compare Acts 4.8 with Acts 4.31 and Acts 9.17 with Acts 13.9. It is also to be noted that the verb to "be filled" with the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 5.18 is written in the continuous present imperative meaning to be continually filled).

We do not believe, however, that speaking in tongues is "the sign" of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. We recognize the fact that this "gift" has been the cause of division in many churches across America, bringing both pain and confusion into the household of God. Since God is "not the author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14.33), we believe it is both permissible and desirable to outline the parameters of every church's membership to avoid confusion and division. As such, we define ourselves, in the modern vernacular, as a "non-Charismatic" church. Thus, we do not publicly practice the so called "sign gifts" of the Pentecostal era.

We do, however, teach and encourage every born again child of God to be filled with the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, to pray in the Spirit, to exercise the fruits of the Spirit, and to give the Holy Spirit free reign to convict of sin, to comfort, to counsel, and to be their teacher in leading them into all truth.

It is our desire and prayer that every member of Grace Community Church will be excited about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives. (John 14.16 & 26; 16.7-14; Galatians 5.16, 22, 23; Romans 8:14, 16, 26, & 27; Ephesians 4.30; 1 Cor. 6.19; 1 Thes. 5.19)

4. We believe God has limited the role of women in the church according to the counsel of His own will. Specifically, the Scriptures teach that women are not to assume the roles of an elder or that of teaching men theological subjects in the church. This does not mean, however, that God ever intended women to be inferior to men in any way. The Scriptures clearly teach that both Christian men and women are heirs in Christ (1 Peter 3.7). We abide by the limitations God has set as a matter of obedience to Him. (1 Timothy 2.11-15; 3.2, the elder is to be “the husband of one wife, indicating this position is reserved for men, since one of the tasks of the elder is to teach others in the church, including the men.)
5. We believe God has excluded all people who are actively practicing immorality from serving in any position within the church. This includes those who are actively involved in adultery, pornography, and homosexuality. We believe it is God’s desire for all men and women who have fallen into sin to come to repentance, but until they do, they are forbidden by God’s Word to serve within His house. If one of our brothers or sisters in Christ is ensnared in such a sin, the Bible instructs us to seek to restore them “in a spirit of gentleness.” (Romans 1.18-32; 1 Cor. 6.9-11; 5.9-13; Rev. 21.8; 22.15 and Gal. 6.1)
6. We believe God has elected the Jewish people and the nation of Israel as His chosen people for all ages. The Scriptures teach that God elected Israel to be a nation of priests to testify of His truth to this world. Historically, we have received the Scriptures, the Messiah and the formation of the New Testament Church through the Jewish people for which we are eternally grateful. We believe even though the nation of Israel rejected Christ as their King, the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. Thus, we believe God will fulfill every promise He has given in the Scriptures regarding His people.

We will be faithful in teaching and preaching that God blesses those who bless the Jewish people (Genesis 12.1-3). We will encourage our body to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122.6), especially that they may soon come to discover and embrace the Prince of Peace, our Lord and Savior.

Finally, we will teach the Biblical doctrine found in Scripture that the gospel is “to the Jew first” (Romans 1.16). Thus, the body of Christ at Grace Community Church will always treat their Jewish neighbors and friends with love and respect while sharing the love of Christ with them by whatever means God shall provide us. (Romans 9, 10 and 11; Ex. 19.5 & 6; Deut. 7.6; 32.8-10; Jer. 31.3, 33, 34 & 37)

7. We believe one of the oldest and most basic messages God has given His people is a clear call to separate themselves from the sins and the sinful pleasures of this world (2 Cor. 6.17).

The children of God in every age have had to make a choice between Christ and the things of this world. Thus, the Bible clearly implores us, “Love not the world or anything in the world” (1 John 2.15). The Scriptures recognize this as a continuing choice to be made daily in the Christian’s

heart and mind. Paul wrote, Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind.”

We find God’s purpose for living a separated life in 1 Peter 2.9, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praise of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” We find the same truth repeated in 2 Cor. 5.20, where we are told that God has made us Ambassadors for Christ committing His message of reconciliation for the world to us. God does not want us to diminish the purity of that message in the eyes of the world by impure lives.

We understand we are living in an age when many of the traditional values of Evangelical, Fundamental Christendom are being re-examined and some are being set aside. We also understand that some of those values may have been predicated more on tradition than upon the teaching of Scripture itself.

In light of this, we believe it is vitally important for every born again believer to know and understand the principles of separation taught in Romans 14.1-15.7 and 1 Cor. 10.23-33.

As we study these passages, we realize that some Christians may feel liberty to participate in certain activities which others do not. God’s solution is that, should a Christian feel such liberty, they are free to proceed, but they should be careful not to condemn themselves by their activity (Rom. 14.22b).

In this same passage, we are told to accept one another without judgment or condemnation, whether we choose to become involved in a particular activity or whether we choose to abstain.

We believe a vital principle to keep in mind at all times is the fact that Scripture teaches if one is to exercise freedom in any area of questionable activity, they are to do so in privacy, rather than to cause other people to stumble by seeing them participate in it. This should not be considered hypocrisy. Rather, it is fulfilling God’s command to “avoid all appearance of evil” and to “give offense to none.” It is an expression of one’s love and concern that their freedom will not become a stumbling block to others.

We are deeply concerned that those who choose to exercise freedom in areas of question do not do so out of a love for the sinful pleasures of this world and a desire to identify with it. (1 Pet. 2.16; James 4.4; Gal. 5.13.) We encourage each born again believer to carefully and prayerfully examine their heart’s motive before becoming involved in any questionable activity. In no case, should these areas of questionable activity ever be introduced into the church or any church-related activity. (Specifically, we are referring to such activities as drinking alcoholic beverages, gambling, dancing and various kinds of questionable commercial entertainment.)

In regard to both private and public entertainment, we would caution each child of God not to call anything “entertaining” for which our Lord was crucified. We should remember the principle that we ultimately become like that which we put into our minds.

It is our desire that every friend and member of the Grace Community family continually apply the standard of Phil. 4.8 to their lives: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable...if anything is excellent or praiseworthy...think upon such things.”

ARTICLE V

Charter

Section 1. Authority:

1. The primary authority by which this church exists as an ecclesiastical body is received from God through the Holy Scriptures.
2. The secondary authority is by the laws of the State of New York, under which it is incorporated.

Section 2. Property:

1. The title of the property of this church shall be vested in the corporate body of the church.
2. All property or assets owned by the local church and its auxiliaries shall be irrevocably dedicated to religious purposes and, upon dissolution, such property or assets shall not inure to the benefit of any private citizen, but shall revert to The Conservative Baptist Home Missions Society, so long as it is then in existence and is a qualified tax-exempt organization. If The Conservative Baptist Home Missions Society fails to qualify, the property shall be distributed to an Evangelical Fundamental religious organization which is a qualified tax-exempt organization, which shall be selected by the members of the local church or in the event of their failure to make such selection, by the Judge of Court of general jurisdiction in the county where said church shall be located.

ARTICLE VIMembershipSection 1. Qualifications:

1. Any person thirteen years old or older who shall have confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and is committed to Him as Savior and Lord, and who shall have publicly submitted to the authority of the Bible as the complete, final, inerrant and inspired revelation of the Triune God to man, and who shall have been baptized in water as a believer, and who shall have consented to the covenants and provisions of this Constitution and By-Laws, may formally become a member of this church.
2. He or she may join the family of God at Grace Community Church by:
 - a. Confession of Faith
 - b. Letter
 - c. Baptism
 - d. Restoration

Section 2. Duties:

Members are expected to be faithful in all spiritual duties essential to the Christian life, to participate in The Lord's Supper, to be loyal to the church, to attend regularly its services, to contribute to its support and charities, and to share in its organized work.

Section 3. Privileges:

1. Only those members in good standing, sixteen years and older, are eligible to vote in all business sessions.
2. Any member who feels a dissatisfaction with the general procedure of any department of this church is encouraged to bring his complaint to the Pastor or any member of The Board of Lay Elders.

Section 4. Withdrawal:

1. Grace Community will provide a letter of membership transfer to any member requesting it who is not under church discipline, or mail it to the church they designate. Their membership at Grace Community will cease with the issuance of the letter of transfer.
2. A member's name may be dropped from the roll upon written request of the member involved.

Section 5. Dismissal:

1. If a member fails to attend worship services for a period of one year, their name shall automatically be dropped from the membership roll. Exceptions to this will be made for members who are: (1) attending college or graduate school in another region; (2) away serving in the military; (3) on a job assignment in another region for less than two years; (4) recovering from a long-term illness; (5) homebound by advancing age; or, (6) for any other reason for which attendance cannot be maintained, but they ask for continuance.
2. Members who join another church shall automatically be removed from the membership roll of Grace Community.

ARTICLE VII

Government

Section 1. Meetings:

1. The chief governing body of Grace Community Church shall be the congregation. The Lay Elders shall provide spiritual leadership in the ministry and day-to-day activities of the church. Their decisions and the direction in which they lead the church must ultimately be approved by congregational vote.
2. All candidates for elected or appointed offices in this church shall be a member of Grace Community Church. They shall be at least 18 years of age and subscribe to the doctrinal statement as outlined in this Constitution.
3. An annual meeting shall be held on a date set by the Board of Lay Elders when the annual reports shall be presented and other business transacted as may properly come before the meeting. If such a meeting conflicts with previously scheduled spiritual activities, the Pastor may, by consent of the Board of Lay Elders, designate any other day of the month as the day in which such meetings shall be held.
4. A Semi-Annual business meeting shall be held. If such a meeting conflicts with previously scheduled spiritual activities, the Pastor may, by consent of the board of Lay Elders, designate any other day of the month as the day in which such meetings shall be held.
5. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor. The Recording Secretary may also call a meeting in response to a written request stating the purpose of such a meeting. The request must be supported by ten percent (10%) of the voting membership.

6. All business meetings shall be publicly announced in at least two regularly scheduled services.
7. Those qualified members present at any duly called business meeting shall constitute a quorum required for the transaction of business.
8. All congregational decisions require a three-fourths vote unless otherwise stated in this Constitution or the By-Laws.

Section 2. Officers and Teams:

1. Pastor.

a. Call:

When the election of a Pastor becomes necessary, the church shall elect a Pulpit Search Team whose duty it shall be to take suitable steps to find the man of God's choice for the position. The team shall consist of no less than seven (7) members, including at least three (3) Lay Elders. As the size of this team is enlarged past seven (7) members, at least 45% of the members shall be from the Lay-Elder Board.

1. The Pulpit Search Team shall present only one candidate at a time to the congregation for consideration.
2. The proposed candidate must receive a vote of 85% or greater from both the Lay-Elder Board and the congregation before a call will be extended.
3. In the event the church should extend a call and the proposed candidate declines the invitation to come—then changes his mind—a revote must be taken by both the Lay-Elder Board and the congregation. The call will only be extended again if the vote in both of those bodies is 85% or greater.
4. The Pastor shall be called to serve the church for an indefinite period.
5. Should the Pastor desire to terminate his ministry in the church, he may do so by giving the church a three (3) month advanced notice either verbally or in writing.
6. Should the church desire to terminate the services of the Pastor, it may do so by calling for a vote in either a regularly scheduled business meeting or in a special meeting called for that purpose. Notice of such a vote shall appear in the Sunday morning church bulletin two (2) Sunday's prior to the meeting and in at least one mailing to the members.

7. A vote of three-fourths or greater by those members present at the meeting shall be sufficient to terminate the Pastor's services.
8. The church shall continue the Pastor's salary and benefits for a period of three months following a vote to terminate his services.
9. In the event the Pastor is employed before the end of the three- (3) month period, his salary and benefits will end upon the effective date of his new employment.

b. Duties:

In addition to the responsibilities unique to the roll of Lay Elders as listed in paragraph two of this section, the Pastor shall provide leadership for the congregation and the Board of Lay Elders, serving as Moderator for the congregational business meetings. He shall consider his primary responsibility that of edifying the saints in accordance with Ephesians 4.11-16. In addition to preaching and teaching the Word of God, he will set a pattern of good works commensurate with his office. He shall be directly responsible for the selection, conduct and dismissal of the staff in consultation with the Board of Lay Elders.

2. Lay Elders.

a. Call.

The congregation shall elect its own Lay Elders according to the qualifications set forth in 1 Tim. 3.1-7 and Titus 1.5-9. Any male member sensing God's call to this office may present himself to the Board of Lay Elders and upon their recommendation, his name shall be submitted to the church for congregational election. The candidate must receive a vote of 85% or greater to be elected to the Lay-Elder Board. If recognition of this Lay-Elder is to be extended beyond the immediate congregation, the normal procedure for licensure and ordination examination shall prevail.

b. Duties.

Lay Elders shall be responsible for the oversight of all matters of church life and practice. They shall see that opportunity be given for regular schedules of public worship, prayer and observation of the Christian ordinances. The Board of Lay Elders, along with the Senior Pastor, shall serve as corporate officers of the church.

The Board of Lay Elders will submit to the congregation for election each year a sufficient number of names to provide a full complement to their board. The number of Lay Elders will be commensurate to the size and growth of the church, but at no time will the Board be less than four (4) members. Initially, the election of the Board of Lay Elders shall be divided into thirds: one-third for a three-year term; one-third for a two-year term; and one-third for a one-year term. After the initial election, all terms shall be for three (3) years.

Lay Elders may not serve more than one full term without going off the Elder Board for one year. They may, however, complete a vacant position for someone else before or following their own three-year term.

A confirmation of the oversight of this Board shall be attested by:

1. Congregational approval of all Lay Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses.
2. Congregational approval of all financial indebtedness of \$1,000 or more and all salaries paid by the church.
3. Congregational approval of any and all amendments to this Constitution by a vote of three-fourths or more.
4. The Lay-Elder Board shall request the voice of the congregation on all matters of particular significance.
5. All full-time pastors and religious education ministers may sit on the Lay-Elder Board upon the invitation of the Board. They will not, however, be a voting member of this body.

c. Termination.

A Lay-Elder may terminate his office to this Board by a written resignation to the Board or Pastor. Immorality, insubordination or teaching contrary to Article II, the "Statement of Faith," shall be cause for immediate termination.

3. Deacons and Deaconesses.

a. Call.

Deacons and Deaconesses shall be chosen from the members of the church according to the qualifications of 1 Tim. 3.8-13. Recommendations for this office shall be submitted to the Board of Lay Elders by members of the congregation. The Lay-Elder Board will then examine the nominee's qualifications according to the standards of 1 Tim. 3.8-13. If the Lay-Elder Board finds the nominee is qualified, they will then present that person's name to the congregation for a note of final confirmation. The nominee must receive a vote of 75% or greater to be elected to the Deaconate. The number of Deacons and Deaconesses shall be determined by the immediate needs of the congregation. The term of service shall be for a period of three years.

b. Duties.

Their ministry shall be to assist the Board of Lay Elders. They may serve on various teams as established and appointed by the Board of Lay Elders. The chairman for each committee shall be a member of the Board of Lay Elders.

A Deacon/Deaconess shall serve for three years. A Deacon/Deaconess may not serve more than one full term without going off the Deacon/Deaconess Board for one (1) year.

c. Termination.

A Deacon or Deaconess may terminate his or her office by a written resignation to the Board of Lay Elders or Pastor. Immorality, insubordination, or teaching contrary to Article II, the "Statement of Faith," shall be cause for immediate termination.

Section 3. Amendments.

1. Articles III through VII of this Constitution may be amended by a three-fourths vote of all members present and voting at a regular business meeting.
2. A written notice of the proposed change or changes must have been mailed to each eligible voting member at least 14 and not more than 60 days prior to the business meeting when the proposed change is to be acted upon. A notice must be published in the Sunday morning bulletin two (2) Sundays prior to the business meeting that a Constitutional change is to be acted upon in the business meeting along with the date and time of the business meeting.

By-Laws:Article 1. The Board of Lay Elders.

Section 1.

- a. The Board of Lay Elders shall have the power to create and revoke new teams as the need arises. A team is defined as a group of individuals responsible for the practical and spiritual function of a given ministry. New teams shall have clearly defined roles as established in writing or as approved by the Board of Lay Elders.
- b. Each Team Chairman shall be appointed by the Board of Lay Elders. Each Team Chairman must be a member in good standing.
- c. The number of elders on the Board of Lay Elders shall not be governed by the number of teams in operation, but will be determined by the availability of qualified people as outlined in Article VII, Section 2, No. 2a of the Constitution. The only numerical requirement shall be that the number not be less than four (4) elders as indicated in Article VII, Section 2, No. 2b of the Constitution, nor more than 20.
- d. At the Annual Business Meeting, the Team Chairman of the various teams will submit reports in writing to the congregation and answer questions about their work.

Section 2.

Procedure for choosing Lay Elders shall be as follows:

- a. Any qualified male member of Grace Community Church aspiring to the office of Lay-Elder may submit his intention in formal written form to the Recording Secretary. The Board of Lay Elders will review the statement of intention and if the elders are satisfied that the individual's life manifests the qualities of 1 Timothy 3.1-7 and Titus 1.5-9, they will arrange for an interview with the candidate in four areas:
 1. His call to the eldership
 2. His personal life
 3. His general biblical knowledge
 4. His agreement with the "Statement of Faith" of Grace Community Church, as set forth in Article II of the Constitution.

If the candidate is approved by the Board, his name will be submitted to the congregation for final approval (Article VII, Section 2, No. 2a).

- b. The qualified members present at the congregational business meeting will vote by written ballot to approve or disapprove of the candidate. A candidate must receive a vote of 75% or greater to be elected to the office of Lay-Elder. If a vote is negative, a scriptural reason must be indicated on the ballot, otherwise the ballot will be invalid.

If recognition is not granted, the candidate must be advised of the reasons stated on the ballot.

- c. Once a man has been elected to the office of Lay-Elder, he will remain a Lay-Elder for a four-year term of service consisting of three years of service on the Board of Lay Elders, and a one-year sabbatical. At the end of the sabbatical period, the term of service in the office of Lay-Elder, as well as his membership on the Board of Lay Elders, will expire unless he is re-elected. Re-election to the office of Lay-Elder, as well as to the Board of Lay Elders, will be in accordance with Article 1, Section 2a and 2b of the By-Laws. He will remain a Lay-Elder until his term expires or such time as:

1. He leaves the membership of Grace Community Church,
2. He resigns from the Board of Lay Elders for personal reasons, or
3. The congregation disqualifies him on the basis of Article VII, Section 2c.

- d. If a Lay-Elder resigns or is removed from the Lay-Elder Board, for whatever reason, his position in the office of Lay-Elder ceases simultaneously.

- e. If a member of the Lay-Elder Board ceases to be an elder, for whatever reason, his membership on the Lay-Elder Board ceases simultaneously.”

- f. If a member of the congregation is aware of an area in the life of an elder that violates the scriptural qualifications of 1 Timothy 3.1-7 and Titus 1.5-9, a letter must be given to the Board of Elders specifically stating the accusation. Since 1 Timothy 5.19 states that an accusation should not be received against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses, the Board of Elders must receive at least two letters before an investigation is conducted. When two letters are received, the Board of Elders shall make a full investigation and take whatever action it feels necessary.

Section 3.

The Board of Lay Elders shall have a Moderator, a Vice Moderator, and a Recording Secretary. These positions must be filled by elders and are elected by the Board of Lay Elders.

a. The duties of the Moderator:

1. The Moderator will act as Moderator of the Board of Lay Elders. The Moderator will also serve as moderator in the congregational business meetings in the absence of the Senior Pastor.

b. The duties of the Vice Moderator:

1. In the absence of the Moderator, he shall act as Moderator of the Board of Elders and of the congregational business meetings.
2. In the absence of the Pastor, the Vice Moderator shall coordinate such duties as should be carried on in the Pastor's absence. The pulpit will be filled by the Worship Team.

c. The duties of the Recording Secretary:

1. Keep a complete record of all official proceedings at regular and special congregational business meetings of the church, which shall be read for approval at the following meeting.
2. Take minutes of each meeting of the Board of Elders and type, duplicate and distribute them to each member of the Board of Elders prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Section 4.

- a. In conjunction with Article VII, Section 2, No. 2, paragraph b of the Constitution: "Duties," that reads: "These Lay Elders shall be responsible for the oversight of all matters of church life and practice...", it is understood that the Board of Lay Elders shall have the authority to override any decision of the Teams.
- b. The Moderator of the Board of Elders and Senior Pastor shall be ex-officio member of all teams.
- c. The Board of Elders shall serve as the Pastoral Care Team.

- d. A quorum of the Board of Lay Elders shall be two-thirds of its total membership.
- e. A three-fourths vote is required on the Elder Board to pass any motion.

Article II. Deacons

Section 1.

- a. The Board of Lay Elders shall present to the congregation a slate of names to be approved for the office of Deacon.
- b. All names shall be individually approved or disapproved by the congregation by indicating “yes” or “no” on the ballot prepared by the Board of Lay Elders.
- c. If a name vote is negative, refer to Article I, Section 2, paragraph “b”.
- d. Names of candidates may be submitted to the Board of Lay Elders by any member of the church. The Board of Elders will determine if the person qualifies according to 1 Timothy 3.8-13, and if so, will submit the names to the congregation as detailed above.
- e. Only one name for each open position will be presented to the congregation at a time. If a person is not approved by the congregation, the Board of Lay Elders will present a new name at a later meeting.
- f. If a vacancy occurs in the Deaconate during the year, or if additional Deacons or Deaconesses are required, the Board of Lay Elders shall appoint Deacons and Deaconesses to serve until the next regularly scheduled congregational business meeting, at which time names will be presented for approval by the congregation.
- g. All Pastor’s wives may, at their discretion, serve as Deaconesses without formal congregational approval.
- h. If a member of the congregation is aware of an area in the life of a Deacon or Deaconess that violates the scriptural qualifications of 1 Timothy 3.8-13, he shall follow the same procedure as indicated for dealing with an elder who is under the same circumstance. The Board of Lay Elders shall also follow the same procedure.

Section 2.

- a. Deacons and Deaconesses will be elected for all Teams.
- b. The Board of Elders shall determine the number of Deacons or Deaconesses who shall serve on each team unless otherwise specified in these By-Laws.

Article III. Membership

Section 1.

Membership candidates will be examined by not less than two (2) elders. Upon acceptance by this committee and endorsement by the Senior Pastor, they will be publicly acknowledged at a subsequent public worship service which will make him or her an official member of the church.

The Board of Lay Elders may establish a prescribed curriculum for membership candidates.

Section 2.

A member in good standing is one who has publicly affirmed his agreement with Grace Community Church's Statement of Faith and who shall be in compliance with Sections 1 and 2 of Article 6 of the Constitution.

Section 3.

- a. If any member of this church is opposed to any of the Bible doctrines as accepted and practiced by this church, or if any member is found guilty of unscriptural conduct, he or she may be disfellowshipped for scriptural reasons. All such cases shall first be investigated by the Board of Lay Elders and the Pastor of the church, who shall give such member due hearing and shall then make recommendations to the body of the Church.
- b. A three-fourths vote by ballot of all members present at any authorized congregational business meeting shall be necessary to disfellowship a member.

Section 4.

Watchcare Membership: It is our desire to minister to everyone who feels led of the Lord to fellowship with this body. We recognize the fact that we are living in a transient society in which people are frequently moved about for short periods of time. We appreciate the fact that they may not want to remove their membership from their

permanent home church, and yet, they desire to be identified with our local body of believers.

The Watchcare membership is designed to minister to just such a person or persons. A person coming under the Watchcare of Grace Community Church can expect full pastoral care and the full support of the body of believers at Grace Community Church.

The only limitation that a Watchcare Membership will place upon an individual is that he or she may not vote in church business meetings.

Article IV. Personnel

Section 1.

- a. An operating budget will be submitted to the congregation at the annual meeting by the Board of Elders for approval.
- b. Any expenditures of a capital nature which are not included in the operating budget in excess of 2 ½% of the most recently approved operating budget will be submitted to the congregation by the Board of Elders for approval.
- c. Any expenditures of a capital nature which are not included in the operating budget less than 2 ½% of the most recently approved operating budget may be approved by the Board of Elders provided that such expenditure does not incur indebtedness.

Section 2.

The church will follow a system of storehouse giving for all general offerings. These offerings will be distributed among the various accounts by the Finance Team in accordance with the approved budget. (Malachi 3)

Section 3.

- a. The filling of the Senior Pastor position will be in accordance with Article VII, Section 2 of the Constitution.
- b. The filling of paid positions other than the Senior Pastor will be by:
 1. Nomination of the individual to the Elder Board by the Senior Pastor
 2. Confirmation of the individual by a 75% or greater vote of the Elder Board.

- c. The Pastor and Elder Board may delegate authority to hire and dismiss individuals filling “non-ministerial” positions to other individuals or committees.
- d. The Elder Board will establish the compensation of each staff member within the budget approved by the congregation.
- e. Termination of the Senior Pastor will be in accordance with Article VII, Section 2 of the Constitution.
- f. Termination of any other individuals may be done so by the Elder Board. The Senior Pastor may suspend a staff member with pay in circumstances of gross misconduct pending an investigation and decision by the Elder Board.

Article V. Business Meetings

The Board of Elders shall make available to the congregation at least one week in advance of congregational business meetings all reports, budgets, ballots, or other business. Exceptions shall be made in the case of emergency meetings.

Items for congregational business meetings shall be submitted to the church office at least three weeks prior to the business meeting. Agenda items submitted from the floor will only be received if at least two-thirds (2/3) of the present qualifying members agree to its discussion and action; otherwise, it will be placed on the agenda of the subsequent business meeting. In no event, may the congregation act upon Lay-Elder and Deacon(ness) nominations made from the floor until such time as the Board of Lay Elders has had reasonable opportunity to interview such candidates as expressed in Articles I and II.

Article VI. Amendments

These By-Laws may be amended upon recommendation of the Elder Board to the congregation at any regularly scheduled congregational meeting. A three-fourths vote of the members present shall be required to amend these By-Laws. No amendment to the By-Laws may be initiated from the floor of the congregational business meeting. All proposed amendments must be submitted in writing to the Board of Lay Elders at least one month prior to the congregational business meeting.

Any proposed amendment to these By-Laws must be distributed to the congregation by mail at least two weeks prior to the congregational business meeting. Notice of the proposed change and the vote must also appear in the Sunday morning church bulletin at least twice before the vote is taken.