

**CONSTITUTION**  
*of*  
**GRACE COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH**

HENRICO, VIRGINIA

*Adopted by the membership on September 22, 2013*

**Preamble**

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants to unite as Grace Community Baptist Church in Henrico County, Virginia, in 1985 for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and He has continually sustained and prospered this work to this present day; and

Whereas we, the members of this body, having searched the Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, acknowledge the need to conform to His will for the Church as constituted by this local body of believers;

We therefore declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith, to assist in governing this body of believers in an orderly manner, to safeguard the inherent liberties of each individual member of this Church, and to preserve the freedom of action of this body in relation to Christ and to other bodies of like faith. This constitution shall be our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the standards set forth in the Statement of Faith of this church and our Covenant of Membership.

**Article I – Name**

This body shall be known as Grace Community Baptist Church.

**Article II – Purpose and Objectives**

Section 1: Purpose

The purpose of Grace Community Baptist Church is to be an enthusiastic family of Christ-centered believers, growing in our love and enjoyment of God and one another, who reach, equip, and mobilize others to become multiplying disciples in the greater Richmond, Virginia, area and beyond.

Section 2: Objectives

The objectives of Grace Community Baptist Church are:

- (a) to cultivate a heart for God that leads into regular fervent prayer that is given time and priority in teaching and practice;

- (b) to systematically study and teach biblical doctrine that leads to having God's view in mind in conviction, practice, and spirit;
- (c) to practice and help others lead and develop family life;
- (d) to grow in and strengthen our love and enjoyment of one another;
- (e) to foster the discovery and responsible use of each member's spiritual gifts;
- (f) to build and train reliable leadership to be spiritual, imitable, and qualified to help develop spiritual growth in each member;
- (g) to have ongoing evangelism, equipping, and mobilization strategies woven into our ministries of service, discipleship, and in the establishment of new congregations;
- (h) to satisfy the Lord's Great Commission that He gave His disciples in Matthew 28: 19 and 20.

### **Article III – Statement of Faith**

The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. This church is in basic agreement with the doctrinal statement of *The Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14, 2000.

### **Article IV- Membership**

#### Section 1: General

This is a sovereign church under the Lordship and authority of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-governance in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church. The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of membership.

#### Section 2: Qualifications

To qualify for membership in Grace Community Baptist Church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized by immersion in accordance to our tenants of baptism, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each candidate for membership must agree to submit to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in our Statement of Faith and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Covenant of Membership. The candidate must also be convinced that Grace Community Baptist Church is the local body to which God has led him/her to be committed.

The church council shall be responsible for determining each candidate's qualification for membership. In making this determination, the council may rely on a person's profession of faith or such other evidence as the Church Council deems appropriate.

Members previously dismissed for the purposes of church discipline [see Article IV, Section 7] may be reinstated upon repentance, request and recommendation of the Church Council by a two-thirds majority vote of those members present and voting at a duly authorized business session.

### Section 3: Covenant of Membership

The members of this church shall be bound in fellowship by embracing the following Covenant of Membership, whereby each member pledges:

- a) to cultivate a regular and daily time of worshiping God through personal prayer and reading of the Scriptures;
- b) to faithfully participate in our corporate time of worshiping God and teaching His Word on the Lord's Day, making His Word his/her final authority;
- c) to pursue the development of the home as an oasis of loving relationships, spiritual education, and practical ministry to others;
- d) to purpose to walk in Christian love, exercising care and watchfulness over other members of this church, and to promote their spiritual growth and well-being;
- e) to esteem, love, and pray for the leaders who God raises up to give leadership to this church and to submit to that leadership so long as they follow the clear direction of the Word of God;
- f) to be committed in at least one specific dimension of this church's ministry, maximizing the spiritual gifts which God has entrusted to him/her;
- g) to endeavor by life, word, and prayer to lead others to personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, establishing them in the faith, and equipping them for victorious Christian living;
- h) to contribute regularly as God directs to the financial support of the ministries which the Lord has entrusted to Grace Community Baptist Church.

### Section 4: Admission of Members

(a) Each candidate for membership shall attend the "Discovering Grace" class. This class taught by the Senior Pastor or his designee is designed to help acquaint each candidate with Grace Community Baptist Church, our beliefs and Membership Qualifications (ref. Article IV, Section 2), and our distinct ministry in the community and the world.

(b) The candidate shall then complete the membership forms, including providing a personal testimony, and submit them to the Church Council.

(c) The candidate shall then meet with at least one Church Council member to resolve any questions and to affirm the candidate's commitment to the Covenant of Membership.

(d) On the Church Council's recommendation, the candidate shall be presented during a Sunday morning worship service and accepted into full membership by a two-thirds majority voice vote of those members present and voting.

## Section 5: Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God.

Each church member aged 16 years and older is entitled to vote in all elections of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote held in church meetings, provided the member is present or provision has been made for absentee balloting.

Only those who are members of this church shall be eligible to serve on standing committees or in certain paid positions within the body as defined by this constitution. Non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the Church Council.

Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation.

## Section 6: Associate Membership (Watch Care)

Students and others temporarily residing in the local area served by Grace Community Baptist Church who are members of an evangelical church and who wish to place themselves under the watch care of this church may apply for associate membership. Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership must be retained. A letter of commendation shall be sought from the applicant's home church.

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

- a) when absent from the geographical area served by Grace Community for extended periods of time, they are released from the responsibility to attend our worship services [Covenant of Membership (b)];
- b) and while they shall be encouraged to participate in members' meetings they shall not be eligible to stand for any office or vote.
- c) on the Church Council's recommendation, the candidate will be presented during a Sunday morning worship service and accepted into associate membership by a two-thirds majority voice vote of those members present and voting.

Termination of associate membership as a disciplinary measure shall be as it is for other members, except that the Church Council shall notify the pastor or elders of the home church of that termination. Associate membership shall normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the geographical area served by Grace Community Baptist Church.

## Section 7: On Church Discipline

Any member consistently guilty of conduct with which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the Church Council and the discipline of the church according to the instructions of our Lord

in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of Scripture. Grace Community Baptist Church will take every reasonable measure to assist any troubled member. Redemption rather than punishment is the attitudinal guideline, and the entire process of counseling an errant member is a serious responsibility whose goal is restoration. Church discipline should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

Church discipline may include admonition by the Church Council or congregation, suspension from membership for a specified time and deposition from church office or committee, and loss of membership. (see Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

The purpose of such discipline should have as its objectives

- a) *the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined* (see Proverbs 15:5; 29:15; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; Hebrews 12:1-11; Psalm 119:115; 141:5; Proverbs 17:10; 25:12; 27:5; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 7:26-27; 18:15-17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; 1 Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 6:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 1:13-14; James 1:22);
- b) *the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them* (see Proverbs 13:20; Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 15:33; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14 [note this was written to the whole church, not just to elders]; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:11; Hebrews 10:24-25);
- c) *the purity of the church as a whole* (see 1 Corinthians 5:6-7; 2 Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 5:27; 2 John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21:2);
- d) *the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians* (see Proverbs 28:7; Matthew 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:1-14; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Peter 2:2; 1 John 3:10); and
- e) *supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character* (see Deuteronomy 5:11; 1 Kings 11:2; 2 Chronicles 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Nehemiah 9:2; Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 36:20; Matthew 5:16; John 15:8; 18:17, 25; Romans 2: 24; 15:5-6; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; 1 Peter 2:12).

The procedures and purposes of church discipline shall also be used for adherents (also known as 'Friends') to the church who are not members as defined in this constitution.

#### Section 8: Termination of Membership

Grace Community Baptist Church shall remove from membership those members who

- a) die;
- b) unite by choice with another church;
- c) request removal, in writing to the church clerk;
- d) are willfully inactive for a prolonged period of time; whereas upon the Church Council's recommendation and after attempts to bring the member back into active fellowship, the member shall be removed from the church membership during a subsequent business meeting by a two-thirds majority of those members present and voting in the meeting;

- e) are guilty of continued willful unchristian conduct as determined through the process of church discipline (see Article IV, Section 7), whereas upon the Church Council's recommendation and after following the guidelines set forth in Article IV, Section 7, the member shall be removed from the church membership during a subsequent business meeting by a two-thirds majority of those members present and voting in the meeting.

The church shall have the authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline or for any other biblical reason.

## **Article V – Church Officers**

### Section 1: General

The Biblical offices in the church are the Church Council, whose members serve as Elders, and the Deacons. In addition, Grace Community Baptist Church recognizes the administrative positions under this Constitution of Clerk, Treasurer, and Trustee. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

### Section 2: Church Council

#### Function:

Subject to the will of the congregation, the Church Council shall oversee the ministry, vision, and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Peter 5:1-4, Council members shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock. The Council's responsibilities shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a. leading the church to function as a New Testament church;
- b. establishing, evaluating, and adjusting when necessary the ministerial vision of the church;
- c. conducting worship services;
- d. encouraging sound doctrine and practice through teaching and example;
- e. admonishing and correcting error;
- f. equipping the membership for the work of the ministry;
- g. examining and instructing prospective church members;
- h. overseeing the process of church discipline;
- i. mobilizing the church for local evangelization and world missions;
- j. examining and approving all prospective candidates for church offices and standing committees before submission to the church for a vote;
- k. overseeing the work of the Deacons and appointing one Council member to serve with the Deacons in an advisory role;
- l. overseeing and evaluating the work of all appointed church agents and committees;

- m. overseeing all paid staff, both ministerial and administrative, providing job descriptions, procedures for evaluations, and recommendations for future positions, including funding proposals for the positions;
- n. maintaining a Policy and Procedure manual (see Article IX);
- o. establishing volunteer ministry positions and/or committees to assist them in fulfilling the vision of the church, defining their objectives, and appointing their members;
- p. presenting an annual budget to the church membership for a vote:
  - i. consulting with the Deacons, the Finance Committee, and other ministries of the church concerning recommendations for funding levels;
  - ii. hosting an informational meeting for the presentation and discussion of the budget to support a church vote to take place no later than December;
  - iii. holding a vote on the budget in a business meeting no later than December.
- q. establishing and administering a benevolence fund, instituting procedures for the fund, and reporting to the church annually its total receipts and disbursements only;
- r. selecting one Council member to serve as the Council chairman, not a paid ministerial member, who shall set agendas for Council members, be the principle liaison to the congregation, and moderate all Council meetings.
- s. selecting one Council member to serve as moderator at all church business meetings;
- t. selecting one Council member to serve as an advisory member on the Personnel Committee.
- u. The Church Council shall be responsible for items that require additional clarification.

#### Membership:

The Church Council shall consist of no less than five members, the majority of which shall be church members not in the regular pay of the church. No Church Council member shall hold the office of Deacon during his tenure.

#### Qualifications:

The church council shall be made up of those men who fulfill the Titus 1:7-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7 profile who are convinced of God's leadership to serve. Candidates for the church council must embrace the purpose of the Grace Community Baptist Church as outlined in Article II, *The Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14, 2000.

#### Election:

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in the calling of the Church Council in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. The Personnel Committee shall bring all nominations for Church Council members. The nomination may be brought at a regular business meeting or a special business meeting.

Candidates for the Church Council must provide a written statement of belief on the following doctrinal points: 1) the Scriptures; 2) God; 3) man; 4) salvation; 5) God's purpose of grace; 6) the church; 7) baptism and the Lord's Supper; 8) evangelism and missions. These written statements shall be available to the congregation for at least three weeks prior to the election for Church Council members.

Church Council terms will begin prior to the annual spring Council planning retreat. A three-fourths majority vote of the church members present at the business meeting in which the election is held shall be required for appointment to the Church Council. This election shall be by secret ballot. Church Council members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as Elders through ordination by Grace Community Baptist Church.

Church Council members shall serve for three year terms. After a member, other than the senior pastor or associate pastor(s), has served two consecutive three-year terms, he may only be elected to the office after at least a one-year sabbatical. Each Council Member term shall be affirmed by church vote, as detailed above, prior to the beginning of a term.

A Church Council member's term of office may be terminated by resignation or dismissal. Any two church members with reason to believe that a Church Council member should be dismissed should express such concern to the Council and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21. Any of the Church Council members may be dismissed by a two-thirds majority vote of the members at any business meeting of the church.

### Section 3: Senior Pastor

#### Function:

The senior pastor shall be a Church Council member and shall meet all requirements set forth for such members. He shall perform the duties of a Council member as described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

His Council membership shall not be subject to the three-year re-election requirement or to the term limitation of Church Council members. He may serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of all church committees, boards, and ministries.

The Senior Pastor shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to the office, leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The Senior Pastor may designate other qualified men to fulfill these duties with the advice and consent of the Church Council.

In the absence or incapacity of the Senior Pastor, the Church Council shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which may be delegated.

#### Calling:

Whenever a vacancy occurs, a Pastoral Search Committee shall be formed by the Church Council, consisting of the Church Council representation and at least two at-large members appointed by the Church Council and approved by the congregation by a two-thirds vote at a business meeting. The Pastoral Search Committee's recommendation of a pastoral candidate shall constitute a nomination. Before placing a name in nomination, the congregation must receive assurance from the Search Committee that, having interviewed the man concerned, it is in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the purpose of the Grace Community Baptist Church as outlined in Article II, *The Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14, 2000.

The candidate for Senior Pastor shall then preach at least one Lord's Day sermon and meet with the congregation for a question and answer session, at which time the candidate shall

introduce himself and give an overview of his philosophy of ministry. He must also provide a written statement of belief on the following doctrinal points: 1) the Scriptures; 2) God; 3) man; 4) salvation; 5) God's purpose of grace; 6) the church; 7) baptism and the Lord's Supper; 8) evangelism and missions. This statement shall be available to the congregation for at least four weeks prior to the election for Senior Pastor.

The election of a pastor shall take place at a special business meeting called for that purpose, held at least four weeks after his meeting with the congregation. Election shall be by an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those members present and voting. Voting shall be done by secret ballot. Absentee ballots must be made available, but abstentions from voting shall not be considered as votes cast in determining percentage of votes. Affirmation of a candidate also confers upon him and his wife membership in Grace Community Baptist Church upon completion of the Discovering Grace class

The Senior Pastor shall assume his office upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

#### Section 4: Associate Pastors

##### Function:

The church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the Senior Pastor is that of Associate. He shall serve and be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the teaching and equipping of the saints in the area(s) to which he has been called.

Associate Pastors shall assist the Senior Pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor or those specifically assigned to him by the Church Council, including responsibilities set forth in a written Job Description, and the congregation.

In the absence or incapacity of the Senior Pastor for defined periods of time (such as a sabbatical or illness), the Associate Pastor(s) may assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the Church Council. Affirmation of a candidate also confers upon him and his wife membership in Grace Community Baptist Church upon completion of the Discovering Grace class

An Associate Pastor shall fulfill the qualifications for a Church Council member as set forth in Section 2. He may be elected as a full member of the Church Council should he be nominated by the Personnel Committee as set forth in Section 2, above, and affirmed by a vote of three-fourths of the voting members present in a business meeting. His service on the Council shall not be restricted by term limits, but he must be affirmed by congregational vote every three years.

##### Calling:

The calling of an Associate Pastor follows the same procedure as that of a Senior Pastor as set forth in Section 3, above.

## Section 5: Deacons

### Function:

The office of Deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. Service is the thrust of the position and responsibility of the Deacon. Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of church members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, support those able to help others, and respond to the Church Council's request for service within the church membership.

The Deacons shall be responsible for the following works of service:

- a. identifying members of the congregation who have financial or physical needs and responding to those needs within the abilities of the Deacon body and the church congregation;
- b. assigning volunteers as are necessary for orderly public worship (e.g. Greeters, Ushers, Tellers, etc.) and designating procedures for the volunteers.
- c. preparing the elements for the Lord's Supper;
- d. preparing the baptismal pool for baptisms and assisting the candidates with preparations (changing rooms, baptismal robes, etc.);
- e. maintaining the church's physical property;
- f. responding to requests of service from the Church Council.

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

### Membership:

The church shall have a minimum of six Deacons. No member can serve both as a Deacon and a Church Council member in the same term.

### Qualifications:

The Deacon body shall consist of members of Grace Community Baptist Church who fulfill the 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Acts 6:3, and Romans 16:1 profile. The church shall recognize members who are giving of themselves in service to the church and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as Deacons.

### Election:

The church shall recognize members gifted and willing to serve in the calling of Deacon in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. The Personnel Committee shall bring all nominations for Deacons. The nomination may be brought at a regular business meeting or a special business meeting. No nomination shall be taken from the floor.

After being nominated and at least three weeks prior to election, the candidate for Deacon shall provide a written Christian testimony which includes a specific call to the office and evidence of that call which shall be made available to church members. Nominations shall be made to support the same election cycle as Church Council members, prior to the spring Council planning retreat.

A two-thirds majority vote of those members present and voting at a business meeting shall be required for election. Voting shall be done by secret ballot.

After serving two consecutive three-year terms, a Deacon may only be re-elected to the office after at least a one-year sabbatical. Each Deacon term shall be affirmed by church vote, as detailed above, prior to the beginning of a term.

### Section 6: Clerk

#### Function:

It shall be the duty of the Clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special business meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, to provide ballots for secret balloting, and to render reports as requested by the pastors, the Church Council, the Deacons, or the church.

The Clerk shall maintain all church records as church property, filing them in the church office when an office is maintained.

The Clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this Constitution shall be available to church members.

#### Qualifications:

The Clerk shall be a member of Grace Community Baptist Church.

#### Election:

The Personnel Committee shall bring a nomination for Clerk, who shall be elected annually. The nomination may be brought at a regular business meeting or a special business meeting. No nomination shall be taken from the floor.

A two-thirds majority vote of those members present and voting at a business meeting shall be required for election. Voting shall be done by secret ballot.

### Section 7: Treasurer

#### Function:

The Treasurer shall receive, preserve, and pay out all money on things of value paid or given to the church. The treasurer shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting monthly reports of account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in records belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the Church Council and the church annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. Upon rendering the annual account and its acceptance the records shall be delivered by the treasurer to the church clerk. The treasurer shall provide gift receipts at the beginning of the calendar year to all contributors who gave financial or other gifts to the church during the previous calendar year in accordance to the laws and regulations regarding such receipts.

The Treasurer shall be a member of the Finance Committee, shall work under its direction, and shall ensure a yearly audit of church financial records as directed by the Finance Committee.

The Treasurer may designate any of these functions to an assistant as approved by the Finance Committee.

**Qualifications:**

The Treasurer shall be a member of Grace Community Baptist Church and shall not be an active Church Council member, Deacon, Clerk, Trustee or paid church staff member.

**Election:**

The Personnel Committee shall bring a nomination for Treasurer, who shall be elected annually. The nomination may be brought at a regular business meeting or a special business meeting. No nomination shall be taken from the floor.

A two-thirds majority vote of those members present and voting at a business meeting shall be required for election. Voting shall be done by secret ballot.

**Section 8: Trustees**

**Function:**

The Trustees shall be the legal custodians of all properties of the church, with the power to assign, encumber, or convey any part or all such properties only upon officially recorded instructions of the church as voted upon by a two-thirds majority of members voting in a business meeting. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church. They shall take all necessary measures working with the Finance Committee for the church's insurance protection and the bonding of those officers and employees of the church required by this Constitution and the church.

The Trustees shall be conformable with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and shall be registered with the Circuit Court of Henrico County as required by law.

**Qualifications:**

Trustees shall be members of Grace Community Baptist Church and may not be active Church Council members, Deacons, Clerk, Treasurer, or paid staff.

**Membership:**

The church shall have three Trustees.

**Election:**

Trustees shall serve until death, resignation, or termination of church membership. Trustees who become inactive in congregational ministry but do not resign their membership may be removed from membership following the procedure in Article IV, Section 8(d), and thereby cease serving as Trustee. Trustees must be replaced within two months of a vacancy, duly elected, and registered with the Court. Trustees shall be nominated by the Personnel Committee, after the Church Council is consulted, and elected by a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting.

## Section 9: Dismissal of Church Officers

### a) Dismissal Due to Financial Circumstances (Paid Positions)

If at any time the financial situation of the church requires it to dismiss paid church officers, it should do so at the last resort. All other means of budget constraints should be applied before paid staff is asked to resign. Alternative arrangements such as part-time employment should also be considered before eliminating the position altogether. A three-fourths majority vote of the church membership shall be required to defund a paid church position.

### b) Dismissal Due to Willful Conduct

#### Grievance Process

1. The grievance process shall at all times be governed by this admonishment of Scripture: Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. I charge *you* before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality" (1 Timothy 5:19-21, NKJV).
2. Instituting a grievance process against any church officer should be initiated only in cases of immorality, unethical or criminal behavior, or unscriptural teachings. Before approaching the Church Council with a grievance against a church officer, individuals must adopt the following attitudes and actions:
  - *Humility* - Time and again, the Scriptures call God's followers to humility. There is no room for pride, ego, consumer-minded feelings, etc. in the decision to remove an officer. Each person involved must submit to God completely and humble himself or herself throughout the entire process.
  - *Prayer and Fasting* - Removal of an officer is a very serious matter and should be undertaken only after a period of intense prayer and fasting.
  - *Studying the Scriptures* - In addition to prayer and fasting, those parties considering this very serious step should thoroughly study the Scriptures, including Jesus' guidelines on handling conflict (Matthew 18) as well as Paul's instructions on church discipline (I Corinthians 5) and the qualifications of an elder (I Timothy 3 and Titus 1).
  - *Process of Accountability and Witnesses* - Once the parties in question have determined in prayer and based on Scripture that they should move toward removing the officer, the actual process should follow Jesus' instructions for addressing offenses and conflict in Matthew 18.
  - *Review of Church Constitution & Bylaws* - Once the matter reaches the Church Council and church membership overall, it is important that proper procedure, as laid out in the church's constitution and bylaws, be followed.

### 3. Steps in the Process

- a. Following the Matthew 18:15-17 mandate, the church officer shall be privately approached by a church member regarding the issue. If this first step is neglected, the Church Council shall not entertain any accusation against a church officer.
- b. If the church officer refuses to engage in personal reflection in consideration of the concerns of a church member or does not repent as necessary of known sin, the second step of Matthew 18:15-17, the concerned church member shall recruit one or two others to approach the church officer.
- c. If the church officer is still unresponsive, the church member(s) involved in the Matthew 18:15-17 process shall approach a lay member of the Church Council.
- d. The Church Council member shall then bring the concern to the entire Church Council meeting called solely for the purpose of addressing the issue. The Church Council shall prayerfully and humbly consider the charge(s) and determine its/their merit(s).
- e. The Church Council is to research the accusation(s) and the specific charges to see if they can be sustained. The Council shall rely on the testimony of no less than two or three witnesses (I Timothy 5:19-21). If the Church Council finds there is cause, the entire Council shall hold a private meeting with the officer to discuss the issue and humbly exhort the officer to repentance and reconciliation. At this point the Council may recommend specific steps (such as counseling) to the officer toward the end goal of repentance and reconciliation.
- f. If the officer refuses to listen to the exhortations and recommendations of the Church Council, the Council shall announce the date of a special meeting of church members for the purpose of informing them of the issues addressed during the grievance process and calling the congregation to a period of fasting and prayer. The announcement of the meeting must precede the meeting by at least two weeks and be publicized via church bulletin and newsletter.
- g. After a specified period of time of at least two weeks after the meeting described in (f.), the Church Council shall conduct a vote of the members of the church at a second meeting. A three-fourths majority of the church members present at the meeting shall be required for dismissal of the church officer from his/her office.
- h. The Church Council shall consider a severance package for paid officers commiserate to the officer's tenure.
- g. At any time during this process, the Church Council and congregation may accept a letter of resignation from the officer, at which time the grievance process terminates. Church discipline proceedings may still occur.
- i. If the church officer is found to have been engaged in criminal activity, the Church Council shall inform the appropriate civil authorities and not attempt to obfuscate the crime(s).

## **Article VI – Standing Church Committees**

### Section 1: General

All standing church committee members shall be nominated by the Personnel Committee and elected by a two-thirds majority of those members present and voting at the meeting. Unless otherwise stated, the committee members shall serve on a three year rotation system with one-third to be elected each year. All committees shall meet at least once a quarter.

The Standing Committees are:

- Personnel Committee
- Finance Committee

### Section 2: Personnel Committee

Function:

The Personnel Committee shall select, enlist, and ensure the qualifications of all candidates for committee positions and church offices defined within this Constitution with the exceptions of Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor and those committees or positions created and governed by the Church Council, the Deacons, and other provisions defined within this Constitution. Whenever vacancies exist, the Personnel Committee shall consult the Church Council prior to making nominations to the church for filling such vacancies. The committee shall present its nominations at a regular or special business meeting for a vote. Notification of nominations shall be made to the church membership at least three weeks prior to the business meeting at which elections are held. Unless otherwise prohibited by this Constitution, nominations will be taken from the floor.

The Personnel Committee shall work with the Clerk to produce ballots necessary for secret balloting as directed in this Constitution.

Membership:

The Personnel Committee shall consist of at least 3 voting members and a Church Council member in an advisory role.

Qualifications:

Members of the Personnel Committee shall be members of Grace Community Baptist Church. Voting members of the Personnel Committee shall not be active Church Council members, Deacons, Clerk, Treasurer, Trustee, or paid church staff.

Election:

Members of the Personnel Committee shall be nominated by the committee, after the Church Council is consulted, and elected at a regular or special business meeting of the church by a two-thirds majority vote. Committee members shall serve for three years. Voting shall be done by secret ballot. Nominations may be taken from the floor during a business meeting.

After a member has served two consecutive three-year terms, he/she may only be elected to the committee after at least a one-year sabbatical.

### Section 3: Finance Committee

#### Function:

The Finance Committee shall have general oversight of all matters of the church that pertain to the expenditure of funds. It is expressly charged with the responsibility of providing the funds necessary to carry out the budget as adopted by the church. Its duties include but are not limited to the following:

- a. obtaining the anticipated needs of each church ministry requiring funds for inclusion in the annual budget;
- b. preparing the final annual church budget for presentation to the church at a specially designated informational meeting for action at a scheduled business meeting;
- c. approving expenditures of budgeted routine operating expenses, including salaries, insurance premiums, utilities, office supplies, etc.;
- d. approving requests from the heads of committees and ministries to budgeted and unbudgeted expenses exceeding \$500 which must be approved in advance by the Finance Committee;
- e. evaluating and approving special offerings or fundraising activities for ministries within the church then make their recommendation to the Church Council.
- f. establishing procedures for collecting, recording, safeguarding, depositing, and disbursing all church funds in conjunction with the Deacons and with approval of the Church Council;
- g. publishing the procedures for (e) and providing a copy of those procedures for congregational reference in the church office;
- h. assuring that the church is not placed under the obligation of debt unless approved by a vote of the church in a business meeting;
- i. ensuring that the church's financial records are audited each year

#### Membership:

The Finance Committee shall consist of the Treasurer and at least 2 other members.

#### Qualifications:

The Finance Committee members shall be members of Grace Community Baptist Church. They shall not be paid staff, Church Council members, Deacons, Trustee, or Clerk.

#### Election:

Members of the Finance Committee shall be nominated by the Personnel Committee, after the Church Council is consulted and elected at a regular or special business meeting of the church by a two-thirds majority vote. Committee members shall serve for three years. Voting shall be done by secret ballot. Nominations may be taken from the floor during a business meeting.

After a member has served two consecutive three-year terms, he/she may only be elected to the committee after at least a one-year sabbatical.

#### Section 4: Other Committees

See Article V, Section 2., item o.

### **Article VII – Church Meetings**

#### Section 1: Worship Services

The church shall meet for public worship on each Sunday morning or as often as designated by the church. These public worship services shall be under the direction of the Senior Pastor or his designee. The Senior Pastor or his designee may cancel services due to inclement weather conditions or other emergencies.

#### Section 2: Special Services or Meetings

Special worship services or any other church meetings essential to the advancement of the church's objectives may be held. These services shall be under the direction of the Church Council or its designee and may include but not be limited to prayer meetings, family informational meetings, church conferences, etc.

#### Section 3: Regular Business Meetings

Church business meetings are worshipful acts of service to the body of Christ, and all members are privileged to participate in them. Notice shall be given of such meetings in the church bulletin, by email, by letter, and/or by posting on the church's website at least two weeks in advance.

A member of the Church Council, designated by the Council, shall act as moderator of a business meeting.

A quorum is necessary in order for any vote to be taken at any business meeting. A quorum shall be defined as 15% of voting members as defined by this Constitution. The Clerk shall determine if a quorum has been met.

Annually the Church Council shall host an informational vision and budget meeting with the congregation and shall hold a business meeting in which the congregation shall vote on the budget.

#### Section 4: Special Business Meetings

Special business meetings may be called by the Church Council, or 15% of voting members petitioning the Council. Notice stating the purpose of the special business meeting shall be given in the church bulletin and by mail two weeks in advance, unless an emergency need exists. If an emergency need exists, as designated by the Church Council, or the purpose of the

special business meeting is to receive a candidate into full membership according to Article IV, Section 4(d), then no prior notice is required.

### Section 5: Elections

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

- a) Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process.
- b) Nominations should proceed from the Personnel Committee in consultation with the Church Council.
- c) All candidates for church office and committee membership should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members.
- d) The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The election of officers and committee members shall be held at regular or special business meetings of the church. Names of nominees shall be placed in nomination by the Pastoral Search Committee or the Personnel Committee as required by this Constitution at least three weeks prior to the election. Elections for the offices of Church Council, Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Deacon, Clerk, Treasurer, and Trustees shall be by secret ballot. Members for standing committees shall also be elected by secret ballot in a regular or special business meeting, with the provision that nominations may be taken from the floor. Ballots shall be provided by the Clerk.

The Church Council shall designate three church members to serve as the counters of the ballot. These members may not be candidates for office or a current church officer or member of a standing committee.

Elections on membership candidates may be taken by voice vote or other method as approved by the Church Council.

### Section 6: Church Calendar Year

The fiscal year of the church shall be the calendar year.

The organizational year of the church shall run from September 1 to August 31.

### Section 7: Parliamentary Rules

The latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be the guide when parliamentary rules of procedure in business meetings of the church are needed as discerned by Council. If this Constitution and *Robert's Rules* ever conflict, this Constitution shall prevail.

## **Article VIII – Church Ordinances**

### **Section 1: Baptism**

This church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.

- (a) Baptism shall be by immersion in water.
- (b) The Senior Pastor or his designee shall administer baptism.
- (c) Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.
- (d) Special provision may be made in the case of physical limitation.

### **Section 2: The Lord's Supper**

The church shall regularly observe the Lord's Supper no less often than quarterly. The Senior Pastor or his designee and deacons shall oversee the administration of the Lord's Supper, and the deacons shall be responsible for the physical preparations.

The church shall invite all baptized believers in the Lord Jesus, regardless of church membership, to participate in the Lord's Supper, with the understanding that this ordinance is to be approached with joy, but also with reverence and fear (1 Corinthians 11:23-32).

## **Article IX – General Provisions**

### **Section 1: Policy and Procedure Manual**

The church shall keep a written Policy and Procedure Manual to guide the church in policies and procedures that are not specified in this Constitution. This shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a. The church's ministerial vision
- b. Finance Committee procedures (see Article VI, Section 3, f)
- c. Job Descriptions for non-ministerial paid staff
- d. Job Descriptions for ministerial staff
- e. Organizational charts depicting lines of responsibility in the administration of the church
- f. Building use guidelines, including use for weddings
- g. Annual ministry and committee goals
- h. Quarterly and annual financial reports

This manual shall be kept in the church office and made available for use there by any member of the church. The church Office Manager shall maintain the manual. The Church Council shall review the manual to recommend changes, if any, and charge Church officers, committees, or ministry leaders to implement changes.

## Section 2: Sales and Special Offerings

There shall be no sale of merchandise, services, or any entertainment for the purpose of raising money for the General Fund of the church. Any organization, class, group, or committee shall be permitted to propose fundraising efforts for its activities provided those activities are consistent with the church's objectives and vision. All requests for special offerings and fundraising efforts shall be submitted to and considered for approval by the Finance Committee, who shall then make their recommendation to the Church Council.

## **Article X – Indemnification and Marriage Provision**

### Section 1: Mandatory Indemnification

If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the Church Council determines that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

### Section 2: Permissive Indemnification

At the discretion of the Church Council, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

### Section 3: Procedure

If a quorum of the Church Council is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of Council members seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

### Section 4: Marriage Provision

The pastors and ordained church officers are not obligated to perform any wedding ceremony that would cause them to violate their conscience or conviction. Under no circumstances are the pastors to officiate, participate, or endorse any wedding ceremony that violates the belief and teaching of this church body in accordance with the Bible. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman

in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

Grace Community Baptist Church reserves the right to disallow the use of its property and resources which it deems inconsistent with proper, faithful, Biblical stewardship. Individuals, groups, and organizations wishing to use church facilities must abide by church facility requirements (see Article IX, Section 1, (f)).

### **Article XI – Dispute Resolution**

In any dispute arising between or among church members, pastors, officers, or staff, the dispute should be resolved by the Church Council or a duly appointed team, by the Church Council, of mature Christian members of the congregation under Biblical guidelines and the Christian Conciliation Rules and Procedures published at [www.hispeace.org](http://www.hispeace.org) or [www.peacemakers.net](http://www.peacemakers.net). Christian mediation should be attempted; but, if mediation does not resolve the dispute, then legally binding Christian arbitration should be employed by the Church Council or individuals selected by the Council in accordance with *Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation*. A decision shall be reached after prayerful consideration, in a spirit of humility, with each arbitrator seeking that which most glorifies God and regarding one another before himself.

Any claim or dispute arising between or among church members, pastors, officers, staff and the church shall be brought to the Church Council, settled by mediation, if necessary, and brought to legally binding arbitration in accordance with the *Rules of Procedures for Christian Conciliation* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker<sup>®</sup> Ministries (complete text of the rules is available at [www.hispeace.org](http://www.hispeace.org) or [www.peacemakers.net](http://www.peacemakers.net)). Notwithstanding this provision, to protect the church and under our risk management obligations, we are required to maintain liability insurance. Therefore, this Christian dispute resolution provision is conditioned upon agreement by our insurers that, in light of the particular facts and circumstances surrounding the disputed matter, this provision, and the process it establishes, will not diminish any insurance coverage maintained by the church.

Judgment upon an arbitration decision may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction. Members, pastors, officer and staff shall understand that these methods shall be the sole remedy for any controversy or claim arising within the church or against the church and expressly waive their right to file a lawsuit in any civil court against one another or the church for such disputes, except to enforce an arbitration decision. In that case, judgment upon an arbitration award may be entered by any court having competent jurisdiction in conformity with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### **Article XII - Amendments**

Changes in the Constitution may be made at any business meeting of the church provided each amendment has been presented in writing at a previous business meeting and copies of the proposed amendment have been furnished to each voting member at least four weeks prior to the vote. Amendments to the Constitution shall be by two-thirds vote of those members present and voting in the meeting.