

WORD OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH



CONSTITUTION

Revised November 2021

Word of Grace Baptist Church Constitution

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Foreword

Believing that God calls His church intentionally to seek and savor the glory of God in all things, this document sets forth the foundational purpose, priorities, and principles for which Christ's church exists.

Preface

There are many reasons why a visible New Testament church should have a confession of faith, a covenant, and a constitution. These documents greatly assist in the efforts of biblically organizing and conducting the ministries which have been entrusted to us by our Head, Jesus Christ. It must be readily acknowledged, however, that these documents, despite their usefulness and desired precision, will avail nothing apart from the presence and power of the Spirit of God in a church. It is with this keen awareness of our absolute dependence upon our sovereign and holy God that these articles are set forth within this Constitution (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Definitions

Constitution: The broader body of mutually agreed upon principles and purposeful structure that govern the affairs of the church

By-laws: The subordinate rules adopted by the church to augment the constitution

Covenant: The church covenant is a summary of how we agree to live together as the body of Christ

Preamble

We, the members of Word of Grace Baptist Church, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves. We are committed and do pledge ourselves and this church to the restoration and furtherance of the complete gospel of Jesus Christ, which is sometimes referred to as "Reformed Theology" or "the doctrines of grace."

Article I – Name

The name of this church shall be Word of Grace Baptist Church. "Word of Grace" refers to the gospel, which is the word of God's grace to us through Jesus Christ, who is the power of God unto salvation (Acts 14:3; Acts 20:32; Ephesians 2:4-10; 3 Romans 1:16).

Article II – Purpose

Our chief purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Therefore, we delight in Christ's preeminence in all things. We proclaim the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. We work to build his church by making disciples who grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, and to equip the saints for ministry until we all reach the fullness of Christ for God's glory alone. (Westminster Shorter Catechism, 1 Corinthians 6:20; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 37:4; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 2:8-10; Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Peter 3:18)

Article III – Confession of Faith

1. All of Scripture is “breathed out by God.” Therefore, we affirm the Bible’s inspiration, inerrancy, and authority. As such, the Bible is the final and sufficient authority in all matters of faith and practice in the church (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
2. At times, it is helpful to issue statements to clarify biblical truth and to correct doctrinal errors and heresies that may arise. Therefore, we fully subscribe to the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith as a faithful exposition of vital biblical doctrines, to aid in the instruction, edification, correction, and protection of the church. The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith does not serve to supplement, add to or subtract from the Word of God. The Confession does serve as a summary statement of the doctrine believed and preached by Word of Grace Baptist Church and may be used to share, as a matter of integrity, with any party interested in joining fellowship with Word of Grace Baptist Church.
3. Believing that the church’s confession nurtures and strengthens the unity and fellowship of the church, the church will periodically review the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith to the congregation, especially to potential members, youth, and children (Phil. 1:27; 2:2)
4. The church may also adopt other historical confessions of faith or issue its own position statements in order to clarify or correct matters of doctrine, ethics, or practice that may arise.
5. The Confession of Faith, Church Constitution, and Church Covenant are accepted by current members and shall be fully subscribed to and accepted voluntarily by new members as they offer themselves for membership.

Article IV – Core Values

In order to preserve a consistent and faithful level of integrity to God, his word, and his church, the following values will drive the church’s priorities:

1. The Primacy of God’s Glory: “My glory I give to no other” (Isaiah 42:8). Therefore, we make decisions based on how God will be glorified, according to the Scriptures.
2. The Sufficiency of Christ’s Grace: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8- 9). Therefore, we receive salvation as a gift from God, and not by our own works or merit.
3. The Priority of the Spirit’s Call: “The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). Therefore, we seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the light of the clear teaching of Scripture.
4. The Authority of God’s Word: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Therefore, we study God’s Word and submit to its teachings for our spiritual growth, the mutual edification of Christ’s church, and God’s glory.

5. The Urgency of the Gospel Mandate: “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:16). It is the desire and intent of the church that the gospel be central in all that we do, therefore, we actively seek opportunities to share the gospel.

6. The Beauty of the Covenant Community: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). Therefore, we walk together, seeking the mutual edification of one another in the bond of Christian fellowship.

7. The Excellency of Expository Preaching and Teaching: “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Timothy 4:13). Therefore, we devote ourselves to a consistent exposition and application of God’s Word, teaching the whole counsel of God according to historic Baptist doctrines.

8. The Majesty and Intimacy of Christ-centered Worship: “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Therefore, we meet regularly on the Lord’s Day and at other times specifically to offer worship that is Christ-centered, God-honoring, and Spirit-led in accordance with God’s Word.

9. The Necessity of Regenerate Church Membership: “You must be born again” (John 3:7). Therefore, we examine ourselves to ensure that we are in the faith and that Christ is in us, and we will encourage one another to stand firm in faith, to persevere in trials, and to demonstrate Christ-like love for one another in all that we do.

10. The Essentiality of Prayer: “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling” (2 Timothy 2:8). Therefore, we will engage in corporate, family, and personal times of prayer for God’s glory.

Article V – Church Government

1. Church Authority: Jesus Christ is Lord and Head of this church. His will, as expressed in the Holy Scriptures of both Old and New Testaments, is the sole and final authority in matters of faith and practice. (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23-24; John 8:31; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Deuteronomy 11:1; 12:32)

2. Church Polity: The government is vested in a plurality of godly men called “Elders.” These men are prepared by Christ and having distinguished themselves in both conduct and doctrine as being worthy of imitation, they are to be chosen and appointed by the church body to serve as overseers. The ministry of the Elders is to provide teaching, leadership, and oversight to the church. The authority of the Elders is limited to the scope of the local church in light of the clear teaching of Scripture. The church is subject to no other ecclesiastical body; however, it may be associated, at the direction of the Elders, with churches of like faith and order for purposes of fellowship, consultation and cooperation. Any such voluntary associations with other bodies shall not infringe on the rights of this church. (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Corinthians 6:1-6; James 5:14; Mt. 22:21; Luke 12:13-14; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17; Acts 6:1-6; 9:26; 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 13; 2 Cor. 2:6)

Article VI – Membership

1. Forms of Membership: A) Regular – All who are received into the membership of the church on the above-mentioned conditions shall be considered members in good standing until such status is changed by one of the conditions set forth in Article VI, Section 4. B) Other – The membership status of invalids, shut-ins, military, Christian workers, and others whose relationship to the church involves special consideration and circumstances, shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.

2. Requirements for Membership: The membership of this church shall consist of those who have given a credible confession of faith in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior and have been baptized upon that profession. Any person demonstrating, by life and word, repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and growth in the fruit of the Spirit; who has been subsequently baptized; and who expresses substantial and non-divisive agreement with the doctrines, covenant, aims, and government of this church shall be eligible for membership. Please reference By-Laws for the Procedure of Receiving New Members.

Termination of Membership: Association with the local church is a voluntary, responsible decision, and commitment. It is the duty of every true Christian to be identified with a local assembly and to be a member, thereof, in good standing. The church recognizes the voluntary nature of this relationship and that it is terminable at will by the individual Christian. Membership in the church may be terminated by one of the following ways:

A) Upon the death of the member.

B) Upon issuance of a church letter of transfer to another church and the member's joining another church of the evangelical faith.

C) Upon withdrawal of fellowship from a member, by the discipline of the church, as provided for in the Scriptures (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5; Titus 3:9-11).

D) By removal for lack of attendance. (Note: Any member who does not regularly attend the Lord's Day worship for an extended period of time due to a lack of commitment [unless there are providential hindrances and special circumstances] shall be removed from membership. This is, of course, after all responsible efforts have been made by the Elders to rectify the situation. (See Hebrews 10:25b).)

E) Upon the request of the member, who is not under suspension or in the process of corrective discipline. (See Article VIII, Section 2.)

Article VII – Conduct

Every church member is expected to maintain a lifestyle that gives evidence of regeneration and manifests spiritual growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 3:18)

1. Means of Grace: Means of Grace are God's appointed instruments by which the Holy Spirit enables believers to receive Christ and the benefits of redemption. All public and private means of grace, such as keeping holy the Lord's Day, regular attendance at all the stated services of the church, daily systematic reading of the Bible, and private and family prayers, shall be urged upon our members. In addition to the primary Lord's Day services, the church may establish other

gatherings, whether small or large, to facilitate the fellowship and discipleship of the church. Such gatherings are to be characterized as Bible-saturated, Christ-Centered, and body edifying.

2. Government of the Home: The church expects its members to follow the Scriptures in home government. God has required that godliness in the home have a high priority in every life. The home holds a central position in God's Law and is the object of frequent exhortation in the New Testament. Men are expected to oversee their households with Christlike servant leadership. They are to love their wives with a Christlike love. Women must be subject to their husbands. Parents should train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4) by holy example, catechizing, consistent education, and firm discipline (including the use of the rod of correction: Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15). Children must reverently obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1). These primary responsibilities, prayerfully executed, will honor the name of Christ in the community and strengthen the cause of Christ in generations to come.

3. Missions and Witnessing: It is the duty of every Christian and of every church to seek to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Missionary efforts are the natural consequence of regeneration (Psalm 51:10-14). "Preach the gospel" is a frequently repeated command of Christ. It is the duty of every child of God to witness by life and word. Personal efforts at witnessing for Christ are expected of every member. Beyond this, we are committed to common efforts in sending the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47).

4. Principles of Giving: It is clearly taught in Scripture and is the solemn privilege and duty of each member to offer to God a portion of the material blessings he has received from God. This is set forth in both positive command and favorable example (Malachi 3:8-11; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9). Hence, we pledge ourselves to systematic giving for the support of this church. The amount of the offering is strictly a matter of personal conscience, liberty, and ability (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). The offerings will be received weekly, in a manner befitting the orderly worship of God (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

5. Christian Liberty: We shall require of each other in our daily walk and conversation loyal obedience to all those moral precepts established in the Word of God (Hebrews 10:24-25). However, where God has not prohibited certain practices in His Word, the Christian has liberty to participate in them. The following principles must always guide the Christian's exercise of liberty:

A) *Fear of God* — As we are the servants of Christ, all our actions must be motivated by love to God. Likewise, all objects must be used for His glory. The term "liberty" is often used as a cloak for malicious self-indulgence, which is sin (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Timothy 4:4-5; 1 Peter 2:15-16).

B) *Love of Brethren* — Though no man may dictate to the Christian's conscience, the welfare of fellow saints must always deeply affect his decisions. In a spirit of serving the brethren, he must do that which he judges will edify them and prevent their stumbling (Galatians 5:13; Corinthians 8:9, 10:23).

C) *Compassion for the Unconverted* — Use of liberty must always be regulated by its effect upon sinners, and that behavior must be chosen which is suitable to win some (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

D) *Watchfulness over the Soul* — Though free in conscience to use all of God's

creation, carefulness in practice is demanded because of remaining lusts. Where the Christian judges himself weak through lust, he must abstain in order to persevere in the faith (1 Corinthians 9:23-27).

6. Support of Church Offices: It is the duty of every member to respect the God-appointed officers of the church. The scriptural duties of church members toward their Pastors, Elders, and Deacons, as well as other ministers and teachers, are as follows:

A) To pray for them, that God would open a door of utterance unto them, to unfold the mysteries of the gospel (Ephesians 6:18-20).

B) To obey them in the Lord (Hebrews 13:7, 17-22; 1 Peter 5:2-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14).

C) To follow their example and lead, as far as warranted by the Word (1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1; Philippians 3:17; Hebrews 13:7).

D) To stand by them, in all their trials and afflictions, and defending them in all good causes. In 2 Timothy 1:15 those of Asia turned away and were blamed for not standing by the Apostle Paul.

Article VIII – Church Discipleship and Discipline

1. Formative Discipleship: Jesus commanded the church to “make disciples” (Mt. 28:19). A disciple is a student and learner of Jesus Christ; one who walks in the ways of Christ and fellowships with him and His Church. The goal of biblical discipleship is to teach the redeemed in Christ to observe all that Christ commands (Mt. 28:20). Formative discipleship is set forth through the teaching of God’s Word, the example of Christian living, and the mutual ministry of the several members of the body of Christ. It has, as its goal, the instruction of disciples, the transformation of their lives, and their edification in love (Ephesians 4:11-13; Romans 12:1-6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-27). Formative discipleship has a sanctifying influence. Every member should be satisfied with his or her God-given ministry; thus, we shall all grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:7-12). Formative discipleship utilizes the talents of each member, whether young or old, for the edification of all.

As members of this church, we recognize our obligation to honor, serve, worship, praise, and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in all that we say and do (1 Corinthians 10:31). Jesus Christ is the Head of the church and, therefore, its Lord and Lawgiver (Ephesians 1:22; Isaiah 32:22). Those who truly love Him will endeavor to keep His commandments (John 14:15). In His Holy Word our Lord has entreated believers to perform certain duties one toward another. Some of these duties are as follows:

1) To love one another without offense or hypocrisy (John 13:34-35; Romans 12:9, 13:8-10).

2) To labor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

3) To endeavor for the edification and spiritual benefit of the whole body that they may all grow up to be a holy temple in and for the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:12, 26; Ephesians 4:12, 29, 2:21-22).

- 4) To watch over one another for good (Philippians 2:3-4).
- 5) To pray with and for one another (James 5:16).
- 6) Not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, for the celebrating of divine worship, thereby promoting one another's spiritual benefit (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42).
- 7) To contend together for the faith and truth once delivered to the saints, in the purity thereof, according to the Holy Scripture (Psalm 93:5; Zechariah 14:2; 1 Corinthians 14:30- 33, 11:2).

The above duties, when faithfully performed by all, will have a positive, formative effect upon the whole assembly; and with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, all will be enabled to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2. Corrective Discipline: Corrective discipline always has for its aim the glory of God, the welfare of the church, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender. Corrective discipline is called for by disorderly conduct or heretical doctrine. Disorderly conduct includes living in violation of the Law of God or Christian morals, walking unruly, and/or persisting in disturbing the unity and peace of the church. Heretical doctrine is defined as a primary doctrine related to salvation which is contrary to the church's standard of life and doctrine. Doctrines related to salvation include those pertaining to the Trinity; the person, work, deity, humanity, virgin-birth, atonement, and all-sufficiency of Christ and

Christ alone; salvation by grace alone; justification by faith alone; and all other things which are essential to the salvation of the soul. Reasonable efforts shall be made through counsel and admonition to resolve difficulties, correct errors, and remove offenses before any further action is taken. No offenses shall be brought before the church until the instructions of Christ have first been followed (Matthew 5:23-24, 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Titus 3:9-11). The following are elements of corrective discipline:

A) Biblical model for reconciliation according to Matthew 18:15-18

1. If a believer is offended or wronged by a brother or sister, the offended party is obligated, by the authority of God's Word, to go directly to the offending party to make the sin or offense known to the offender and to seek reconciliation. This encounter is to be between the two parties alone. This is God's primary means of reconciliation and often results in the resolution and reconciliation of most inter- personal conflicts.
2. If the offending party refuses to hear the offense or is unwilling to reconcile, the offended party is then required to bring two or three witnesses (these may be officers in the church, elders or deacons) to establish the evidence of the offense before these witnesses. The desire is that in so doing, the matter may be resolved with the help and weight of the additional witnesses.
3. If the offending party persists in his/her refusal to reconcile and make the matter right, it is then to be brought to the church and in so doing, made public to the congregation of believers (in a members meeting). This brings Godly pressure to bear to bring the matter to a concise resolution. If the offender refuses to hear the

church, more severe discipline is to be brought to bear up to removal from the membership.

B) Suspension of Membership: If a member has publicly sinned but shows hopeful signs of repentance (including submission to the scriptural admonitions of church officers), severe discipline, such as removal from fellowship, would be improper. Nevertheless, serious offenses may not be overlooked, lest God's enemies multiply their blasphemies, lest other saints be emboldened to sin, lest Christ come against the church with the sword of His mouth (Revelation 2:16), and lest the offender is harmed by a failure to examine himself and appreciate the gravity of his offense. Therefore, at the discretion of and under the leadership of the Elders, suspension of membership may be imposed. Suspension of membership consists of a temporary suspension of the rights to attend the Lord's Table, to serve or teach in the church, or to attend membership meetings. During the process of this discipline, the church is to actively seek reconciliation to those under discipline. Those who submit to such discipline, upon a credible repentance, are to be wholly forgiven and received as brethren. All such actions shall be reported to the membership by the elders.

C) Removal from the fellowship of members: When restoration is not secured by the previously defined steps (reconciliation or suspension), further steps must be taken to correct offending members.

1. Written notification shall be given to the accused offender to outline the offense and steps that have been taken for correction. This letter will also serve as communication to the church membership and inform them of the situation.
2. In following the process for Elder to congregational discussions, the Elders will discuss the matter with the families comprising the membership of the church.
3. After these congregational discussions, the Elders shall recommend that the offending member be removed from formal membership and call a membership meeting for formal removal.
4. With the Elders and congregation aligned, the removal will be brought to the congregation in the membership meeting.
5. The congregation will affirm this removal, and the offender shall receive written notification of the removal.

D) Restoration: The Elders will meet with those who have been previously disciplined or removed when they have judged that reconciliation can be achieved. Such action is to be reported to the membership by the Elders. Upon the recommendation of the Elders, it is the joy of the church to forgive, restore, and welcome those who give satisfactory evidence of repentance (2 Corinthians 2:6-8). This procedure is outlined in Article 6 section 3.

Article IX – Corporate Worship

1. Regulative Worship: According to the Scriptures, God alone is the Subject and Object of all Christian worship. God alone determines who may worship Him and what constitutes acceptable worship (Exod. 20:3-7; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37-38; Lev. 3:1-10). The Scriptures reveal the elements of worship that God requires. The church gathers weekly on the Lord's Day to worship God as follows:

- A) In the public reading, preaching, teaching, and hearing of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13).
- B) In the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs of praise with grace in our hearts toward God (Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16).
- C) In the faithful practice of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. (Mt. 28:19; Lk. 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-29)
- D) In the offering of prayers to God with thanksgiving (Phil. 4:4-6; 1 Tim. 2:8).
- E) In the giving of tithes and offerings to God as acts of worship and for his glory in the work of the ministry, the support of vocational Elders, and the meeting of needs (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Activities not specifically regarded as worship will not interfere with the services set apart expressly for worship. Such activities may be engaged at times other than worship service.

2. Expositional Preaching/Teaching: As the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), and God's Word is a lamp unto our feet (Psa. 119:105), it follows that the preaching and teaching ministries of the church will emphasize an expositional approach to the delivery of the message.

An exposition is simply an explanation, in this case, of a particular text of Scripture, whereas a topical approach to preaching and teaching begins with a topic, for which a variety of passages are chosen to support, illustrate, defend, and apply the topic. An expositional (or expository) approach begins with a biblical text, explains the text, and applies the text.

Although a topical approach may be advantageous in certain circumstances, the ordinary course calls for a clear, consistent, and faithful exposition of each Scripture text in the context of a systematic study of each book of the Bible.

Article X – Church Officers

1. General Statement: Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His church. However, as Head, He has ordained that individual churches should be blessed with the spiritual rule and ministry of special office bearers. Therefore, it is the duty of the church to seek to discover those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary graces and gifts for office bearing. The Lord's appointment is recognized through the understanding of the biblical definition of the office, the inward conviction of the individual involved, and the approval of the church, as it observes the possession of those required graces and gifts.

It should be the desire of the congregation to come to one mind regarding those office bearers to whom they must submit in the Lord, but should such unanimity not be fully realized, a majority vote of the membership present and voting at a duly called meeting shall be required for the election of an officer. (See Article III., Section 1: of Appendix C: By-Laws.)

Christ has ordained that the administration of local churches is to be by Pastors/Elders and Deacons (Acts 14:23, 6:1-6; Philippians 1:1). When the church is too small to maintain both offices, Pastors can function as both Elders and Deacons until such time that the growth of the church requires Elders and Deacons.

2. Eldership: The Eldership, as under-shepherds, is responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of church discipline, the watchful care of the souls of the members (as those who must give account to God), and the oversight of the church in all its ministries and functions. All Elders shall be men who are equipped and knowledgeable in the Holy Scriptures, in full communion with the church, of mature and sound judgment, of unquestioned Christian character, loyal to the Word of God, able to teach sound doctrine, devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and the spiritual welfare of the church, and in full agreement with the Confession of Faith of our church. They shall be ordained as Elders at the earliest convenience after their selection.

All Elders, to one degree or another, are engaged in Pastoral work and are equal in power, authority, and rule (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17). As such, all Elders may be called Pastors. However, within the parity of the Eldership there is diversity. Thus, some Elders are more specifically set apart to be given continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2-4).

A) *Teaching Elders* (Pastors): Among the Elders are those whom we call Pastors. These are set apart for prayer and the study of the Word and should, as far as is possible, be fully and adequately maintained in material necessities, so as to be disentangled from the cares of a secular calling.

1. A Pastor, being by scriptural terminology a "teaching and ruling Elder," must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications for this office, as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-9.
2. Anyone called to this office must be able to affirm conscientiously his full agreement with the Confession of Faith, the Covenant and Constitution of the church. Should he at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this clearly known to the Eldership and subsequently to the church.

3. The Pastor shall seek to discharge all the functions of his office as set forth in the Scriptures and in keeping with the exercise of his own distinctive gifts of ministry (Acts 20:17-28; Colossians 1:28; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
4. If at any time, the Pastor shall make application to be released from his office, or if the congregation shall choose to dismiss him, the relationship between Pastor and church may be terminated by the congregation in ninety days from the date of notice of intention, or in a shorter period of time, if it is mutually agreed upon (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

B) *Ruling Elders*: There are some godly, spiritually minded, gifted men who desire to minister in the church as an overseer, but do not sense the call to, or believe they have the requisite giftedness for the full-time (vocational) ministry of the Word. These can and should be brought into the Eldership. (Every Elder bears rule and must be “apt to teach.” (1 Timothy 5:17)).

1. Anyone desiring the office of Ruling Elder must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-9.
2. Anyone called to this office must be able to affirm conscientiously his full agreement with the Confession of Faith, the Covenant and Constitution of the church.
3. Elders must seek to discharge their duties as set forth in the Scriptures, particularly such passages as Acts 20:17-28, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Hebrews 13:17.
4. They shall assist the Pastor at the Lord’s Table, make suggestions regarding the Pastor’s pulpit ministry, and encourage him in the work of the Lord. Elders may at their discretion call upon one or more Deacons to assist with their responsibilities when necessary.

C) *Requirements of the Eldership*: It shall be required of all teaching and ruling Elders to:

1. Maintain the qualifications for the office of Elder, as found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
2. Mutually respect and submit to the other Elder(s) in the fear of God and in the love of Christ, realizing that this is not his church or work, but Christ’s.
3. Give to the church wherein he holds office (of his time, talents, and tithes).
4. Be at all stated meetings.
5. Meet with the other Elder(s) at least once a month.
6. Attend all functions, activities, and fellowships, unless providentially hindered.
7. Periodically and systematically review and evaluate his performance, regarding his responsibilities and divisions of labor.

D) *Responsibilities of the Eldership*:

1. General Responsibilities — The Elders shall have the general oversight of all the church’s affairs.
2. Membership and Discipline — The Elders shall give leadership in receiving applicants for church membership. Likewise, they shall lead in the administering of biblical church discipline to offending members, in accordance with Article VIII. They shall watch over the souls of the flock as “those who must give account” (Hebrews 13:17). They must be persistent in prayer for, and in the visitation and instruction of the membership and its families.
3. Church Officials — The Elders shall appoint the directors of all church groups. These, in turn and upon request, shall be responsible to present to the Elders, for their approval, all proposed teachers, leaders, and teaching materials.
4. Pulpit Supply — It shall be the duty of Elders to supply the pulpit with men whose ministry in our church shall be consistent with the Confession of Faith of this church.
5. Grievances and Suggestions-The Elders shall receive and dispose of any grievance, suggestions, or recommendation by any members of this church. The Elders shall take action as necessary to convene a special meeting of the congregation expeditiously to address and dispose of the issue.

3. Deacons: The Diaconate shall consist of all this church’s duly selected Deacons. The Deacons must be men who evidence the personal and domestic qualifications as set forth in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. They must first be tested (proven) men, men of doctrinal and personal faith, in full communion with the church, being sober in life, having a good reputation, and able to comfort the poor and oppressed.

A) *Requirements of the Diaconate*: It shall be required of all Deacons to:

1. Maintain the qualifications for the office of Deacon, as found in 1 Timothy 3:8- 13 (cf. Acts 6:3).
2. Mutually respect and submit to the other Deacon(s) in the fear of God and in the love of Christ, realizing that this is not his church or work, but Christ’s.
3. Give to the church wherein he holds office (of his time, talents, and tithes).
4. Be at all stated meetings of the church.
5. Attend all functions, activities, and fellowships, unless providentially hindered.
6. Meet collectively with other Deacon(s) regularly
7. Always keep open communication with the Elders.
8. Create a division of labor among the Deacons in areas where individually and especially gifted and faithfully carry out these duties before God and man. Note: This division of labor is not meant to negate or intrude upon those mutual duties that are required of all the

Deacons.

9. Periodically and systematically review and evaluate himself in his responsibilities and divisions of labor. Each must be a Deacon in deed, and not just a Deacon in name.

B) *Responsibilities of the Diaconate:*

1. **General Responsibilities** — Deacons are responsible for the business and secular affairs of the church, which are to be administered with spiritual grace and under the oversight of the Elders. They shall be watchful to assist the Elders at the Lord's Table, the Pastors' tables (i.e. financial support), the widows' tables in every possible way.
2. **Ministry of Mercy** — The ministry of mercy in our church and community is a specific responsibility of the Diaconate. The Deacons shall see that the widows, the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the feeble-minded receive spiritual and physical comfort. They shall minister the Word of God in administering the church's benevolence funds and in rendering counsel to those in assistance. They shall be vigilant in seeking and pursuing opportunities to do good, especially to those of the household of faith.
3. **Business Affairs** — The Deacons, under the oversight of the Elders, shall have general executive powers to administer the business affairs of this church. It shall be the Deacons' responsibility to work in preparing the church budget and submitting it for the Elders' approval before presenting it to the church for adoption each year. When the congregation has approved the budget, it will be the Deacons' responsibility to oversee the administration of it. The duty of caring for and maintaining the church's properties shall belong to the Deacons and others on an "as needed basis."
4. **Limitation of Powers** — The Deacons shall not encumber, lease, transfer, sell, or purchase any real estate or movables to, by, or for the church except by the express authorization of the membership. No obligation shall be incurred to spend over \$10,000.00 above the annual budget without the approving vote of the congregation.
5. **Sabbaticals:** A sabbatical is a time of refreshment and deep reflection on a person's work and life with the church. Sabbaticals for Pastors are highly recommended in order to renew the calling and creativity of our spiritual leaders. Such sabbaticals should include intentional times for reflection, rekindling the spirit, and deepening spiritual life and family relationships. The congregation should arrange for the Pastor's sabbatical because it is biblical, and because both the Pastor and the church need it. A sabbatical for the Pastor can provide time to focus on reading, writing, preaching, and prayer, and encourages members to exercise their ministries for the good of one another and the gospel.

A) *Sabbatical Planning:* Sabbatical planning should include the church as well as the Pastor.

1. Each installed Pastor should be encouraged to consider an appropriate sabbatical leave no less frequently than every five to seven years.
2. The length of the sabbatical leave may vary. A length of two to three months ought to be given serious consideration.

3. During a sabbatical, salary and benefits should continue to be paid as during normal service.
4. Unusual expenses incurred during a sabbatical leave (i.e. cost of tuition, travel, etc.) are the responsibility of the minister.
5. Following completion of a sabbatical, a minister is ethically obligated to remain as Pastor for at least one year, unless released from this obligation by the consent of the church.

Article XI – Finances

The work of this church is financially dependent upon the voluntary tithes, offerings, and gifts of God's people. Before the annual congregational meeting, the Elders shall obtain from the Deacons an estimate of the needs of the several divisions of the work and a prepared budget, detailing the proposed expenditures for the coming year. When this budget is approved by the Elders, it shall be considered the basis for the current liabilities. The fiscal year of the church shall begin January 1 and end December 31.

Article XII – Cooperative Associations

As an autonomous local church, we may establish, maintain, or dissolve associations, as it deems necessary for the edification of members, the enhancement of ministries, or the enablement of missions (Acts 15; 2 Cor. 8:16-24; Gal. 1:1-2; Col. 4:12-16). The Elders will consider and recommend to the church any such association deemed necessary and beneficial to the church that accords with the clear teachings of Scripture and does not undermine the church's confession of faith, its covenant or practices. Such affiliations will be brought before each church member/family. Any reservations should be made known to the Elders directly. The Elders will then make their determination. Withdrawal from such associations may be affected by the same procedure.

Article XIII – Amendments

Amendments to the Constitution may be adopted by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting, provided that such amendments have been distributed by the officers in written form at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

Appendix A

Church Covenant

As God established the New Covenant with his elect in Christ, the church resolves to covenant together for the glory of God, the edification of the church, and the advancement of the gospel:

“Having been brought into fellowship with God by divine grace through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and having been led by his mercy to give up ourselves to Him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and believing God’s call to be a church that intentionally seeks and savors the glory of God in all things, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully establish our covenant with each other for the glory of God, the edification of the church, and the advancement of the gospel:

1. We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
2. We will walk together in brotherly love, as become the members of a Christian Church; exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.
3. We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, or neglect to pray for others and ourselves.
4. We will endeavor to bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord all who are at any time under our care and by a pure and loving example seek the salvation of our families and friends.
5. We will rejoice at each other’s happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other’s burdens and sorrows.
6. We will seek, by Divine aid, to live Godward lives in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts; remembering that, as we have been buried symbolically by baptism and raised again spiritually with Christ, we are called to lead a new and holy life.
7. We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we maintain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. As a local congregation, we will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel to all nations in obedience to Christ. (Mark 16:15)
8. If any of our members is providentially relocated, we will help them unite with another Bible believing church as soon as possible where they can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word. (Heb 10:25)
9. “May the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit be with us all. Amen.””

Appendix B

By-Laws

Congregational Meetings

Section 1: Notice of Meetings

Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services on the two successive Sundays immediately prior to the meeting. In an emergency, a meeting may be called by the Eldership on shorter notice by notifying each local member of the time, place, and purpose of the congregational meeting.

Section 2: Number of Meetings

One congregational meeting shall be held annually for the reception of reports and the transaction of such other business as may properly be brought before the meeting. A congregational meeting shall be held in October and shall be called the Annual Meeting. The adoption of a budget shall take place at the Annual Meeting.

Section 3: Method of Calling Meetings

It shall be the right and responsibility of the Elders to call all congregational meetings. A written request to call a congregational meeting, clearly stating its purpose, signed by 10% of the members of the church in good and regular standing, and presented to the Eldership, shall require the Elders to call such a meeting. When special congregational meetings are called, there must be notice given to the congregation as to the purpose.

Section 4: Responsibility for Meetings

The Elders shall arrange the details of all congregational meetings and shall see that all possible preparation for their successful conduct is made. A meeting agenda shall be established in advance of the meeting.

Section 5: Quorum for Transaction of Business

The voting members present at any constitutionally called congregational meeting shall be considered a quorum for the transaction of business. All church officers shall be voted upon by written ballot.

Section 6: Voting Age

Any member of the church eighteen years of age or over, in good and regular standing, shall have the right to vote on any question properly brought before the congregation.

Membership

The membership of this church shall be composed of individuals who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and affirm the tenets of Word of Grace Baptist Church Constitution and By-Laws, and who demonstrate evidence, by their confession and conduct, that they are living in accord with their affirmations of this Constitution and By-Laws, and are actively pursuing and continuing in a vital fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The membership of the Church, under the leadership and authority of the governing board of Pastors and Elders, shall have final authority in all matters of church governance, as set forth and described in the By-Laws.

In order to keep an accurate membership roll, there shall be an annual review of the membership roll by the Elders one month prior to the Annual Meeting. All who have been inactive members, for whatever cause, will be classified as such and will be notified of this action in writing. If they offer no response or recommitment, they shall be removed from membership.

1. Procedure of Receiving New Members: Any person who meets the above requirements and expresses their desire to join the church, can apply for membership to the Pastor or one of the other church officers, preferably an Elder. A time and place shall be set for a meeting with the applicant, and no less than two church officers, one being an Elder, shall attend. They shall discuss the applicant's basic Christian experience, commitment to Christ, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to support wholeheartedly the total ministry of this church. The Elders will then invite church members to visit with the candidates. Any questions or concerns about a candidate shall be brought to the Elders.

After the initial interview with the officers/Elders has been completed, the Elders will contact each church member or family and present the candidate (s) to the members and invite the church members to visit with the candidate(s). Any questions or concerns about a candidate shall be brought to the Elders directly. Any member who cannot in good conscience receive someone into the fellowship of the church is to make their reservations known to the Elders at this time.

Once the interviewing church officers/Elders are satisfied that an applicant gives a credible demonstration of faith and meets the requirements for membership (as mentioned above), has contacted all existing members/families, the Elders will then proceed with the candidate(s) membership into the church. At a regularly scheduled Lord's Day worship service (prior to the commencement of the worship portion of the service), the applicant(s) shall be called to stand before the church and answer the following questions:

- 1) Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His wrath and displeasure, and that you are without hope apart from His sovereign mercy?
- 2) Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God and the *only* Savior of sinners; and do you receive and rest upon Him *alone* for salvation as He is offered in the gospel?
- 3) Do you resolve and promise in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit that you will endeavor to live a life worthy of a follower of Christ?
- 4) Do you promise to faithfully support this church in its worship and work, to the best of your ability?

5) Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of this church, and do you promise to seek its purity and its peace?

With an affirmative response to these questions, the applicant covenants to support and be subject to the government and discipline of this church, under the Lord Jesus Christ and His infallible Word. The Elder will then ask the congregation to acknowledge and welcome the applicant into membership by an affirming "AMEN". The right hand of fellowship will be extended to the applicant as a member in full communion with this church.

Church Officers

Section 1: The Method and Requirements for Selection of Elders and Deacons

- A. Except for Pastor or Pastors (who may be called from outside the church), all officers shall have been a member of the church for a period of at least one year before being placed in the nomination process.
- B. Consent must be obtained from the nominees before their names are placed before the congregation.
- C. The term of church officers shall begin upon their selection and shall continue until they die, or Christ returns the second time, or they disqualify themselves from the office.

Section 2: Nomination of Officers

Each year, two months prior to the Annual Meeting, the existing Elders and Deacons shall review the biblical requirements for Elders and Deacons and then to go over the list of male members in good standing, to consider whether or not new names should be presented to the congregation for nomination as Elders and/or Deacons. Recommendations may be made to the existing Elders and Deacons from any member of the church, provided it is done with prior permission of the individual being recommended.

The Elders and Deacons shall notify the church of all nominees for said offices at least two Sundays prior to the Annual Congregational Meeting or, if the need arises, at least two Sundays prior to a specially called meeting for this purpose or for calling a Pastor from outside the congregation.

If there is a need for a full-time Pastor from outside the church, the Elders shall work with the Deacons to consider one man at a time to invite for presentation to the congregation as a Pastoral candidate.

If there are those in the congregation who have scriptural grounds for objecting to any of the nominees,

they shall personally bring these to the attention of the Elders no later than one week prior to the congregational meeting.

At the congregational meeting the Elders will present the nominees to the congregation for the proper action. Each nominee shall be voted on separately and independently from the other nominees. Each nominee for office must receive a majority vote of the membership present and voting at a duly called meeting.

1. Installation of Elders: In a regular worship service of the church, the presiding Pastor shall ask the newly elected Elder(s) the following questions:

- 1) Do you believe in and submit to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God and the *only* infallible and authoritative rule of faith and practice?
- 2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church, *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to the other Elders the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
- 3) Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of this church and believe it is in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?
- 4) Do you accept the office of Pastor/Elder in this church and promise to faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the church over which God has made you an overseer?
- 5) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the LORD?
- 6) Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity, and edification of this church?

After the Elder-elect has answered all the questions in the affirmative, the presiding Pastor shall ask the members of the church the following question:

Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a Pastor/Elder; and do you promise to yield to him all that honor, encouragement and obedience, in the LORD, to which his office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this church, entitles him? (If so, the members answer by raising their right hands.)

After the above-mentioned action, the presiding Pastor shall invite forward the presbytery (Elders of our church and invited Pastors/Elders from sister churches). They shall place their hands upon the head of the new Elder and set him apart with the laying on of hands and prayer. One Pastor appointed beforehand shall lead in the prayer of ordination.

When prayer is concluded, the ordaining Pastors/Elders shall take the newly ordained Elder by the hand and give him the right hand of fellowship into the holy office of the Eldership. The presiding Pastor

shall then say:

“I pronounce and declare that _____ has been regularly elected, ordained and installed as an Elder in this church, agreeable and according to the Word of God. As such, he is entitled to all encouragement, honor and obedience in the LORD. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” Following this, the people shall be exhorted to esteem and obey those whom God has placed over them.

2. Installation of Deacons: In a regular worship service of the church, the presiding Pastor shall ask the newly elected Deacon(s) the following questions:

- 1) Do you believe in and submit to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God and the only infallible and authoritative rule of faith and practice?
- 2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church, The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to the Elders the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
- 3) Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of this church and believe it is in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?
- 4) Do you accept the office of Deacon in this church and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the church over which God has made you a waiter of tables?
- 5) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
- 6) Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity, and edification of this church?

After the Deacon-elect has answered all the questions in the affirmative, the presiding Pastor shall ask the members of the church the following question:

“Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a Deacon; and do you promise to yield to him all that honor, encouragement and obedience, in the LORD, to which his office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this church, entitles him?” (If so, the members answer by raising their right hands.)

After the members of the church have answered in the affirmative, the presiding Pastor shall invite forward the presbytery (Elders of our church and invited Pastors/Elders from sister churches). They shall place their hands upon the head of the new Deacon and set him apart with the laying on of hands

and prayer. One Pastor appointed beforehand shall lead in the prayer of ordination.

When prayer is concluded, the Pastors/Elders shall take the newly ordained Deacon by the hand and give him the right hand of fellowship into the holy office of the Diaconate. The presiding Pastor shall then say:

“I pronounce and declare that this Brother has been regularly elected, ordained and installed as a Deacon in this church, agreeable and according to the Word of God. As such, he is entitled to all encouragement, honor and obedience in the LORD. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

Following this, the people shall be exhorted to esteem and follow those servants whom God has placed among them.

Church Duties

Section 1: Monthly Meetings

The Elders and Deacons shall hold their respective meetings monthly.

Section 2: Quorum and Call for Meetings

A quorum for an operating body (e.g., Elders or Deacons) shall be two-thirds of the total number of members. Such a body shall meet at the call of any of its members.

Section 3: Duties of the Church Clerk

The church Clerk is a Deacon appointed by the Elders. The Clerk shall keep minutes and records of all business transacted at the congregational meetings, current membership, and necessary and related correspondence of the congregation.

Section 4: Duties of the Church Treasurer

The Treasurer, a Deacon, shall deposit all church funds in a bank account, or accounts, as instructed by the Elders and other Deacons, which accounts shall be opened and maintained in the name of the church. He shall disburse the same at the direction of the Elders and other Deacons. He shall make monthly reports to the Elders and other Deacons and an annual report to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. He shall submit his books for annual audit at the end of the fiscal year and at such other times as he may be directed to do so by the Elders and other Deacons. He *may be* required to furnish a bond, the amount of which shall be determined by the Elders, and the cost of which shall be paid by the church. Immediately following any service, he shall see that all offerings are counted and that a record of them is maintained. An assistant treasurer, another Deacon, or if there are no other Deacons, a member appointed by the Treasurer and/or Elders may assist in these duties.

Administrative Bodies

Section 1: Leadership Team

The Leadership Team shall be comprised of the Elders and Deacons. Their function shall be the government and administrative duties of the church. While the government of the church rests with the Elders, there are various administrative tasks that Deacons may carry out and therefore Deacons may comprise a component of the Leadership Team at the Elders' discretion.

Section 2: Finance Team

The Finance Team shall be comprised of the Treasurer and some or all the Deacons as needed. Their duties include preparing and recommending to the congregation an annual budget. After it has been approved, this team is to assist the Treasurer in overseeing the administration of the budget.

Section 3: Missions Team

The Missions Team shall be comprised of the Elders and any additional members appointed by the Elders. Their duties shall include leading the church in supporting and participating in responsible mission activities and efforts.

Employees Hiring and Termination

The governing body of Pastors and Elders shall have the authority to hire all staff and other employees and to terminate such employment.

Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

We believe that marriage is a sacred and blessed gift of God. We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: marriage is that institution ordained and sanctioned by God that joins one man and one woman in an exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture, the Holy Bible. We believe that God intends sexual activity to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexual conduct, transgenderism, pedophilia, incest, bestiality, necrophilia, pornography, voyeurism, any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the local church as the visible Body of Christ and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by this church in any capacity, or who serves as officially appointed volunteers, should agree with, abide by, and conduct themselves according to this Statement of Marriage and Sexuality.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Holy Scripture nor the doctrines of this church. The position of this church is that proclaiming God's stance on any given subject, as revealed in the Holy Bible, embodies love and that the withholding of such proclamation or proclaiming contrariwise embodies hate.

Amendments

Amendments to By-Laws may be adopted by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting, provided that such amendments have been distributed by the Elders in written form at least two weeks prior to the meeting.