

Constitution

Preamble

We, the members of Grace Baptist Church of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, do ordain and establish the following Articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves:

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this church shall be “Grace Baptist Church of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.”

ARTICLE II

Purpose

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures in promoting His worship, evangelizing sinners, and edifying the saints. To this end we are committed to proclaiming God’s perfect Law and His glorious Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world, and to defending the “faith once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3)

ARTICLE III

Articles of Faith

We do hereby adopt as the fullest expression of our faith the London Confession of Faith of 1689. This ancient document is a most excellent summary of things most surely believed among us. We accept the same not as an authoritative rule or code of faith, whereby we are to be fettered, but as an assistance to us in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. Here we will have a body of Divinity in small compass and by means of Scriptural proofs will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us (I Peter 3:15).

ARTICLE IV

Membership

Section 1. Reception of members

Any person desiring to unite with this church shall present a written application for membership to the Board of Elders, through the Pastor. The Board shall then meet with the applicant, who will be examined as to his or her conversion, Christian experience and doctrinal belief.

Baptism as a believer is a prerequisite for church membership.

When the Board of Elders is satisfied that an applicant is a Christian who meets the requirements for membership, the Board may accept that person as a member, by a two-thirds vote. The right hand of fellowship will be extended to the new member by the elders of the church at a regular worship service.

Section 2. Transfer of members

Letters of transfer may be granted by the Board of Elders to members who apply for them, provided they are in good standing and not subject to nor under discipline at the time of application.

ARTICLE V

Conduct

Section 1. Means of Grace

All public and private means of grace, such as keeping the Sabbath, regular attendance at the services of the church, daily systematic reading of the Bible, and private and family prayers shall be urged upon our members.

Section 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 attention in God's Law and is the object of frequent exhortations in the New Testament. Men are expected to rule their homes with gentleness but firmness. Women must be subject to their husbands in everything. 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. Children must reverently obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1, Proverbs 23:13–14). These primary responsibilities, prayerfully executed, will honor the name of Christ in the community and strengthen the cause of Christ in generations to come.

Section 3. Missions and Witnessing

It is the duty of every Christian and of every Church of Christ to seek to extend the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Missionary efforts are the natural consequences 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 for sending the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Section 4. Principles of Giving

We also assert our conviction that Christians are to support the work of the Lord by offerings made to the local church. Proportionate giving is a distinct and positive command in Scripture (Malachi 3:8–11). Hence we pledge ourselves to systematic contribution for the support of this church with a proportion of our income, according to the principle in I Corinthians 16:2.

Section 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:

(1) Fear of God

As the servant of Christ, all actions must be moved by a motive of love to God, and all objects must be used for his glory. The term “liberty” is often used as a cloak of malicious self-indulgence, which is sin (II Corinthians 10:13; I Timothy 4:4–5; I Peter 2:15–16).

(2) Love of Brethren

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

(3) Compassion for Sinners

Use of liberty must always be regulated by its effect upon sinners, and that behavior chosen which is likely to win some (I Corinthians 9:19–22).

(4) 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 perseverance (I Corinthians 9:23–27).

Section 6. Marriage and Human Sexuality

(1) Biblical Perspective

Human sexuality was created by God as a part of the natural order wherein He created both male and female (Genesis 1-3). The determination of one’s gender is a matter of biological and genetic code which is reflected in the physical distinctions between males and females at birth. Marriage has only one legitimate meaning. Marriage exclusively joins one male and one female in a single, life-long, covenantal union, as delineated by scripture (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:22-24; Mt. 19:5; Mk. 10:7-8; Eph. 5:31). Therefore as a result of these perspectives, this will be the only marriage recognized by this church, and marriage ceremonies performed by our pastor in any facility owned, leased, or rented by this church will only be those ceremonies that are sanctioned by God as reflected in the above perspectives.

(2) Biblical Practice

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that all the following forms of sexual activity are sinful perversions of God’s gift of sex, which include but are not limited to: homosexuality, lesbianism, bi-sexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, pornography and transgenderism. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one’s gender by surgery or appearance (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9-11; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 21:6-8).

(3) Position Papers

Our position and practice are more fully defined and delineated in the following position papers: On the Sanctity of Marriage; On Homosexual Behavior and Ministering to Homosexual Persons; On Church Facility Use.

ARTICLE VI

Church Discipline

Section 1. Formative Discipline

The church must build up its members by the use of and submission to the gifts of both old and young. If the mutually sanctifying influence of the whole body, as taught in I Corinthians 12:12-27 be well understood, and every member be satisfied with his God-appointed place, we shall all “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18). We regretfully acknowledge that the failure of formative discipline leads to the necessity for subsequent sections.

Section 2. Corrective Discipline

Corrective discipline results from disorderly conduct or heretical doctrine which is contrary to the church’s standard of life and doctrine. Reasonable efforts shall be made to resolve difficulties and remove offenses before any action is taken. No offenses shall be brought before the church until the instructions of Christ first have been followed (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-16). Corrective discipline always has for its aims the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender.

(1) Exclusion

If the member is habitually absent from the fellowship of this church without just cause, or is unwilling to settle differences on Scriptural grounds, or requests severance of membership, he or she may be excluded from membership at the discretion of the Board of Elders.

(2) Suspension

If a member has publicly sinned, but shows hopeful signs of repentance, including submission to the admonitions of church officers, severe discipline such as excommunication would be improper. Nevertheless, severe offenses may not be overlooked altogether, lest God’s enemies multiply their blasphemies, lest other saints be emboldened to sin, and lest the offender be harmed by a failure to test his own soul and appreciate the gravity of his offense. Therefore, at the discretion of the Board of Elders, it may impose lesser terms upon a member such as public rebuke or suspension of membership. The latter consists of a temporary suspension of the right to attend the Lord’s Table, publicly serve in the church, or vote in congregational meetings. Those who submit to such discipline are to be wholly forgiven and received as brethren. All such actions of the board shall be reported to the congregation.

(3) Excommunication

When restoration is not secured by the processes required in Matthew 18:15-18, further steps must be taken to correct offenders. Written charges shall be given to the accused if he requests a trial. The Board of Elders shall meet with the accused, unless the person refuses to appear. After a fair and impartial hearing of all the witnesses accessible, and all the facts ascertainable, the Board of Elders must form a judgment. If the majority of the Board believe the accused to be guilty and deserving of severe discipline, it shall make a recommendation that the offender be excommunicated at a duly called congregational meeting. The congregation shall have the right to excommunicate a member by a two-thirds of the members present and voting.

Section 3. Restoration

It is the duty of the church to forgive and restore to membership those persons who give satisfactory evidence of being penitent (II Corinthians 2:6-8). The Board of Elders may restore those who have been excluded or suspended when they have judged that the aims of the

discipline have been accomplished. Such action is to be reported to the church. Upon recommendation of the Board of Elders the congregation shall have the right to restore an excommunicated person by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting.

Section 4: Offenses Applicable to Church Discipline

We believe the Bible teaches us what is moral. Behavior that is deemed immoral brings shame upon the name of Christ and the testimony of the local church (1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9-11). This includes but is not limited to sexual immorality and sexual deviancy (1 Thess. 4:3-8). While sexual behavior may or may not be known publicly, these sins pollute the church and disrupt its mission. Scripture denounces sexual impurity. These sins include adultery, homosexuality, and every other kind of sexual deviancy or impurity that Scripture calls fornication (Rom. 1:26-27) (See Article V, Section 6 above). Such conduct constitutes an offense that necessitates disciplinary action.

ARTICLE VII

Church Officers

Section 1. Define the terms

We believe the Scriptures authorize two offices only in the church of our day. These offices are elder and deacon. We affirm our belief in a plurality in each office. We use the word “pastor” to designate our elder who gives himself full-time to the Gospel ministry and the word “elder” to designate the man or men whose ministry is less extensive in respect to time given to the office. We affirm our belief in full parity amongst elders, and nothing written elsewhere in this constitution is to be interpreted in a way that would compromise this parity.

Section 2. Church Offices

The officers of this church shall consist of Elders and Deacons. Except for the pastor, all officers shall have been a member of the church for a period of at least one year before being placed in nomination. The Board of Elders shall submit nominations for all officers to the congregation. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. Consent must be secured from the nominees before their names are placed before the congregation. The terms of church officers shall begin upon their election. Retiring officers shall hold office until their successors are chosen.

Section 3. Elders

The church shall elect no fewer than two elders.

The pastor shall be chosen by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting. He shall be recommended to the congregation by the Board of Elders, after prayerful investigation and consideration. Only such men shall be recommended who can and will conscientiously affirm and uphold the Confession of Faith, Constitution and By-Laws of this Church. If at any time the pastor shall make application to be released from his office, or if the congregation shall choose by majority 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. If the relations between the pastor and the congregation become detrimental to the welfare of the church, the Board of Elders shall have authority to consider this matter and make recommendation to the congregation at a duly

called congregational meeting. If the pastor's life or preaching shall violate the standards of this church, and the Board of Elders so recommends, the service of the pastor may be terminated immediately following a congregational meeting, at which his dismissal has been requested by a majority vote of those present and voting.

Other elders shall be elected from the membership for terms of six years. Each candidate shall be voted on individually, with two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at the congregational meeting needed to elect him.

Elders shall be men in full communion with the church, of mature judgment, of unquestioned Christian character, loyal to the Word of God, able to teach sound doctrine and devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and the spiritual welfare of the church (I Timothy 3; Titus 1:6-9). They shall be ordained as elders after their first election as soon as convenient.

Section 4. Deacons

The church shall elect from its membership no fewer than two nor more than seven deacons, whose term shall be for three years. Each candidate shall be voted on individually, with a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting needed to elect him.

Deacons shall be men in full communion with the church, being sober in life, having a good reputation, and being able to comfort the oppressed (I Timothy 3:8-13). They shall be installed as Deacons after their first election as soon as convenient.

It shall be the duty of Deacons to be diligent and faithful in attendance at Board of Deacons' meetings and at the regular services of the church. They shall be watchful to assist the elders in every possible way.

ARTICLE VIII

Board of Elders

Section 1. Board of Elders

The Board of Elders shall consist of this church's duly elected elders.

Section 2. Responsibility of the Board of Elders

The Board shall have the general oversight of all this church's affairs. The conduct of all church business and the work of all church organizations shall be subject to its supervision and government.

Section 3. Officers of the Board of Elders

Following each annual congregational meeting, at its first meeting, the Board of Elders shall reorganize. A President and a Clerk shall be elected from the membership of the Board of Elders to serve for one year, or until their successors are elected.

Section 4. Membership and Discipline

The Board shall accept applicants for church membership and apply discipline to offending members in accordance with Article IV and VI. The Elders shall watch over the souls of the flock as "they that must give account" (Hebrews 13:17). They must be persistent in prayer for, visitation of, and instruction of the membership and its families.

Section 5. Church Officials and Teachers

The Board shall appoint the superintendent of the Sunday School and the directors of all church groups. These in turn, upon request, shall be responsible to present to the Board of Elders for its approval, all proposed teachers and leaders.

Section 6. Pulpit Supply

It shall be the duty of the Board of Elders to supply the pulpit with men whose ministry in our church shall be consistent with the Confession of this church.

Section 7. Grievances and Suggestions

The Board shall receive, consider, and dispose of any grievance, suggestion, or recommendation by any member or organization of this church.

Section 8. Miscellaneous Duties

The Board of Elders shall exercise all other powers and duties which properly belong to the sole governing body of an independent church, congregation and corporation, but shall at all times be subject to the majority vote of the congregation unless otherwise stated.

ARTICLE IX

Board of Deacons

Section 1. Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons shall consist of all this church's duly elected deacons.

Section 2. Ministry of Mercy

The ministry of mercy in our church and community is a special responsibility of diaconate. The Board of Deacons shall see that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the feeble-minded receive spiritual and physical comfort. They shall minister the Word of God, administer this church's benevolence funds, and render counsel to those in need of succor. They shall be vigilant for opportunities to do good, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Section 3. Business Affairs

The Board of Deacons shall have general executive powers to administer the business affairs of this church. It shall be the deacons' responsibility to prepare the church budget and submit it to the Board of Elders each year. When the congregation has approved the budget, it will be the deacons' responsibility to administer it. The duty of caring for and maintaining the church's properties shall belong to this board.

Section 4. Limitation of Powers

The Board of Deacons shall not encumber, transfer, sell or purchase any real estate for the church except by the express authorization conveyed by a majority vote of the membership present at duly called congregational meeting. No obligation shall be incurred to spend more than two percent of the annual church budget total on one item without the special vote of the congregation, unless that item already appears in the adopted budget.

Section 5. Representation at Meetings

The Board of Deacons shall inform the Board of Elders of all their meetings so that a representative may be present.

Section 6. Officers of the Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons shall reorganize at its first meeting following each annual congregational meeting. A president, secretary, and treasurer shall be elected to serve for one year or until their successors are elected.

ARTICLE X

Ordinations

Section 1. Elders

- A. Do you believe the Scriptures as written in the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and do you accept them as the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
- B. Have you personally adopted and will you cheerfully submit to and defend the Confession, Constitution and By-Laws of this church?
- C. Do you accept the Office of Elder readily, and do you promise to perform its duties of caring for the flock of God in the fear of His name?

Then the hands of the existing eldership shall be placed on the heads of the new elders and prayer offered in their behalf. Following this, the people shall be exhorted to esteem and obey those whom God has placed over them.

If the pastor to be installed is chosen from the existing eldership, the installation will be by mere announcement of the administrative change in status coupled with provision for his financial support. The installation of a pastor from outside the existing eldership will be in accordance with Article VII Section 3 and this section's preceding paragraph.

Section 2. Deacons

In a regular worship service of the church, the pastor shall question newly elected deacons as follows:

- A. Do you believe the Scriptures as written in the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and do you accept them as the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
- B. Have you personally adopted and will you cheerfully submit to and defend the Confession, Constitution and By-Laws of this Church?
- C. Do you accept the office of deacon and do you promise to care for the poor and needy and to manage the business of this church in the fear of God?

Then the hands of the elders shall be placed on the heads of the new deacons and prayer offered in their behalf. Following this, the people shall be exhorted to esteem and obey those whom God has placed over them.

Section 3. Ministers of the Gospel

It is our hope that the spirit-filled men will be called out from among us to proclaim the Gospel of the Grace of God. The church will commission such men by giving license to those whose ministries will be limited in scope or time, or by ordination to the ministry.

When there is a prospective candidate for ordination to the ministry, the Board of Elders shall guide that person in his studies and preparation. It will then call a council to examine the qualifications of the candidate. It shall look into the soundness of his conversion, the godliness of his walk, the soundness of his doctrine, the degree of his gifts, the extent of his training and the blessing of God upon his labors for Christ.

If the council heartily recommends that the candidate be ordained, the church may give the recommended commission by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting.

The Board of Elders, under the principles set forth in Article VI, shall have the power to discipline, even to the revocation of this church's ordination or license.

ARTICLE XI

Finances

The work of this church is financially dependent upon the voluntary gifts of God's people. Before the annual congregational meeting, the Board of Elders shall obtain from the Board of 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 a majority vote of the congregation, it shall be considered the basis for the current liabilities. No committee or board is authorized to make changes in its provisions, or to make unauthorized disbursements without the consent of the congregation.

The fiscal year of the church shall begin January first and end December thirty-first.

ARTICLE XII

Associations of Churches

When it is thought desirable to have fellowship, consultation, and cooperation with local churches of like faith and order, this church may join itself to associations of churches. Upon recommendation of the Board of Elders, such affiliations may be entered by a vote of the congregation. Withdrawal from associations may be effected by the same procedure.

Delegates to such associations shall be chosen by the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE XIII

Amendments

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

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I **Congregational Meetings**

Section 1. Notice of Meetings

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

Section 2. Number of meetings.

Congregational meetings shall be held quarterly for the reception of reports and the transaction of such other business as may properly be brought before the meeting. The quarterly congregational meeting held in January shall be the Annual Meeting. The regular election of officers and 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 Board of Elders to call all congregational meetings. A written request to call a congregational meeting, stating clearly its purpose, signed by fifteen members of the church in good and regular standing and presented to the Clerk, shall require the Board of 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 of Meeting

The Board of Elders shall arrange the details of all congregational meetings and see that all possible preparation for their successful conduct is made.

Section 5. Quorum for Transaction of Business

The voting members present at any constitutionally call congregation meetings 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.

ARTICLE II **Church Boards**

Section 1. Monthly Meetings

The Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons shall hold regular monthly meetings.

Section 2. Quorum and Call for Meetings

The quorum of the Board of Elders or of the Board of Deacons shall be two-thirds of the total number of the Board. They shall meet at the call of their President, or at the request of any member of the Board.

Section 3. Duties of the Church Clerk

The clerk shall keep a record of all business transacted at the congregational and Board of Elders' meetings, keep an accurate record of the membership, and carry on all necessary correspondence for the Board of Elders and the Congregation.

Section 4. Duties of the Church Treasurer

The Treasurer shall deposit all church funds in a bank account or accounts, as instructed by the Board of Deacons, which account shall be opened and maintained in the name of the church. He shall disburse the same at the direction of the Board of Deacons. He shall make monthly reports to the Board of Deacons and an annual report to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. He shall submit his books for an annual audit prior to the Annual Meeting, and at such other times as he may be directed by the Board of Deacons. The Treasurer shall be primarily responsible for all offerings received by the church, and immediately following any service he shall count and keep a record of all offerings. An assistant Treasurer may be appointed to assist in these duties.

ARTICLE III

Amendments

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