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The  
**Covenant**  
and  
**Constitution**

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**of Grace Reformed Baptist Church**

Mebane, North Carolina

*The **Covenant and Constitution of Grace Reformed Baptist Church***  
Mebane, North Carolina

*Adopted in 1974*  
*Revised and adopted in 2022*

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## Church Covenant

God, in the New Covenant, has made us members of Jesus Christ and of one another (Rom. 12:4-5). Having been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:8-9; Matt. 28:19-20), we will, relying on his gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully love God, one another (1 John 3:16; 4:16; John 13:34), and the world through the gospel of Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Matt. 28:18-19; Rev. 5:9-10).

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:4-6; John 17:11).

We will walk together in love (Eph. 5:2), strive for the good of the body (1 Thess. 5:14-22), exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully admonish and encourage one another as occasion may require (Gal. 6:1-2; Heb. 10:24).

We will not forsake assembling ourselves together, nor forsake praying for others and ourselves (Heb. 10:25; 1 Tim. 2:8; Col. 4:2-4; 1 Tim 2:1).

We will nurture those under our care in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4) and, by a pure and loving example and testimony, seek the salvation of our family and friends (1 Tim. 4:12; John 1:41; Matt. 28:19).

We will rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, bearing each other's burdens with tenderness and sympathy (Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:2).

We will seek, by God's grace, to walk worthy of our calling to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (Phil. 1:27; Titus 2:12), to remember that we have been buried by baptism and raised with Christ to newness of life (Rom. 6:1-4; Col. 2:12), and to seek to live to the glory of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

We will hold fast to the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints and revealed in the Holy Scriptures (Jude 3; 2 Thess. 2:15); and if perilous times of persecution should come (2 Tim. 3:12), as our God enables us (Jude 24-25), we will not draw back from our holy profession (1 Tim. 6:12-16) but strengthen and encourage one another to persevere (Heb. 10:23-25).

We will work together to perpetuate a faithful ministry in this church as we sustain its public worship, biblical ordinances, church discipline, and confessional doctrines (1 Tim. 3:15; 4:13). 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 (1 Tim. 5:17; 6:18; 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8:3; Phil. 4:18).

We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word (Rom. 16:3; Heb. 10:24-25).

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all (2 Cor. 13:14). Amen.

## **Preamble to the Constitution**

This congregation dates back to 1963 as the Community Baptist Church. In 1974 the church was formally reformed with a rewritten constitution, including a confession of faith and eventually a new name—Grace Reformed Baptist Church—to reflect the emphasis of the preaching.

We believe the Scriptures to be our only infallible guide and intend this Constitution to be subservient to them. The ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order, and morals is the Bible alone. Though some rules of church order contained in this Constitution are not specifically prescribed in the Scriptures, we consider it wise to articulate the following standards and procedures for orderly conduct (1 Cor. 14:33), which we voluntarily agree to observe.

The 1997 revision of this Constitution has its basis in the constitutions of Grace Immanuel Reformed Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, MI and Trinity Baptist Church in Montville, NJ, to whom we are indebted for their labors. We owe an additional tremendous debt of gratitude to Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. for their constitution, which was instrumental in the 2022 revisions to this Constitution.

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## **Article 1 – Our Name**

The official name of this church is Grace Reformed Baptist Church. This church may also informally be referred to as Grace Church.

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## **Article 2 – Our Purpose**

Our purpose is to love God, one another, and the world through the gospel of Jesus Christ. The glory of God shall be the ultimate purpose in all the church's activities, such as:

1. the promotion of the public worship of God (John 4:23-24; Phil. 3:3),
2. the edification of the saints through preaching, teaching, discipleship, loving pastoral care, and the administration of the ordinances (1 Pet. 5:2; 2 Tim. 3:15-16; Jude 3-4; Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28-31),
3. the proclamation of the gospel to the world (Matt. 28:18-20; Phil. 1:12-21; Rom. 1:8; 1 Thess. 1:8),
4. the mutual fellowship and communion of believers (Rom. 12:10, 16; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 5:19; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:12-14; Heb. 10:24),

5. the display of the character of God through love and good deeds (Matt. 5:14-16; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14; 3:8, 14; Heb. 10:23-25).
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## **Article 3 – Our Doctrinal Commitment**

### ***Section 1. Church Confession***

We adopt as our primary doctrinal statement the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 (the “Confession”) (See [Article 12.2.2](#) in this Constitution for Exemptions and [Article 12.3](#) for Additional Affirmations). This document shall be kept on file and be made publicly available. The Confession is an assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith, a means of edification in righteousness, and a source of church unity.

### ***Section 2. Church Covenant***

Grace Reformed Baptist Church worships together under a Church Covenant. The covenant summarizes how we are to live as a church and follows the practice of believers throughout the centuries. All members are required to affirm their commitment to the covenant.

### ***Section 3. Polity Commitment***

Our commitment as a church to a common polity is defined in this Constitution, the Confession, and the Church Covenant. Questions may arise among members about whether an action, contemplated or taken, is in accord with or violation of these documents. In such cases, the elders shall attempt to resolve the matter privately to the satisfaction of all concerned. If they are unable to do so, a special members’ meeting may be called pursuant to [Article 5.3.6](#).

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## **Article 4 – Membership**

### ***Section 1. Qualifications***

To qualify for membership in this church, a candidate must be a believer in Jesus Christ, manifest a life transformed by the power of Christ, have been baptized in obedience to Christ following conversion, wholeheartedly believe in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible, and be ready to assume the responsibilities of church membership. Each member must affirm the doctrines essential to orthodox, reformed Christianity and the biblical order of this church from the Confession (including the affirmations of [Article 12.3](#) of this Constitution), strive to abide by the Church Covenant, and submit to the church’s governance as disclosed in this Constitution.



## ***Section 2. Admission of Members***

### **Paragraph 1. Process**

All candidates for membership shall first complete the membership class and then meet with the elders. The elders shall be responsible for determining each applicant's qualification for membership nomination. In making this determination, elders rely on a candidate's profession of faith, along with such other evidence as the elders deem appropriate. When the candidate is deemed eligible for membership as outlined in [Section 1](#), the elders shall announce the candidate's pursuit of membership to the church.

### **Paragraph 2. Evaluation**

Following this announcement, a period of no less than four (4) weeks will be allowed for affirmations, objections, or questions to be raised privately with the elders by any member concerning the applicant's manner of life or doctrine. The elders shall postpone a person's reception into membership until objections are investigated and resolved to the elders' satisfaction.

### **Paragraph 3. Approval**

When there are no unresolved objections at the end of the stated period, the elders will present the candidate to the congregation at a stated meeting of the church to share their testimony of faith in Christ. The candidate's testimony shall be verbally delivered to the congregation by either the candidate, an elder, or a reader approved by the elders. After delivering their testimony, a candidate shall be accepted by a three-fourths majority of those members present and voting. Such a vote will also result in the affirmation of baptism (if required) and the nominee's immediate reception into membership. The member shall at that point relinquish membership in other churches with the exception detailed in [Article 4.3.2](#).

## ***Section 3. Privileges and Responsibilities of Membership***

### **Paragraph 1. General Privileges**

1. In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, it is the privilege and responsibility of all members to pray for the church devotedly, attend services faithfully, attend the Lord's Supper especially, love one another earnestly, contribute to the ministry and life of the church cheerfully (consistent with God's leading and the gifts, time, and material resources entrusted by Him), participate in members' meetings regularly, vote on the election or removal of officers, vote on decisions regarding membership status, vote on the church budget, vote on amendments to church documents, and vote on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote.
2. We acknowledge that some members are unable to fulfill some of these responsibilities for unavoidable providential reasons, such as mandatory military service, prolonged

illnesses, limited cognitive abilities, specific life conditions, vacations, or other special circumstances.

3. In virtue of our Lord's will that only those who are under the government of His church should be admitted to the privileges of His church (Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor. 10:16; and see the Confession, 26:12), only those who are members of this congregation shall be entitled to serve in the official ministries of the church; non-members may serve on ad-hoc bases with the elders' approval. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of professional consultation.

### **Paragraph 2. Temporary Membership**

Students and others temporarily residing in the Mebane area who are members of evangelical churches may apply for temporary membership. Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out in [Article 4.1](#), except that home church membership is retained. A letter of commendation shall be sought from the applicant's home church. Temporary members may not vote on the amendment of church documents or the election of officers in the church, nor may they be eligible to stand for any office. Termination of temporary membership as a disciplinary measure is the same as for full members, except that the elders shall notify the pastor or elders of the member's home church of that termination. Temporary membership normally terminates immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the Mebane area. At the end of their residence, the temporary member shall formally inform the elders of their departure and resignation.

## ***Section 4. Corrective Church Discipline***

### **Paragraph 1. General Principles**

1. Any member consistently neglectful of his or her Christian duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church and/or rendering doubtful a profession of faith, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matt. 18:15-17 and the example of Scripture.
2. The goals of church discipline are always the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church (1 Cor. 5:6-7), and the repentance, restoration, and spiritual growth of the offender (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:5-8; 2 Thess. 3:14; 1 Tim. 5:20).

### **Paragraph 2. Means of Discipline**

Church discipline can include admonition, public reproof or censure, suspension from communion and members' meetings for a definite period, deposition from office, or excommunication (Matt. 18:15-17; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; 1 Cor. 5:4-5).

### **Paragraph 3. Public Reproof or Censure**

Public reproof consists of a pastoral effort, before the gathered church, to call an impenitent church member to repentance for sin too blatant to be dealt with in an exclusively private manner; or to deal with serious sin even where there may have been repentance (1 Tim. 5:20; Titus 1:10-13). The elders may administer public censure whenever in their judgment either public misconduct (Gal. 2:11-14; 1 Tim. 5:20), patterns of sin (Titus 1:12-13), or serious doctrinal error (Titus 1:10-13) pose a significant threat to the godliness, unity, or testimony of the church.

### **Paragraph 4. Suspension**

Though suspension is not a required step in the discipline process, some misconduct on the part of a member may be so detrimental to the unity, holiness, and testimony of the church that it requires the suspension of some of the privileges of membership (Rom. 16:17-20; 2 Thess. 3:6-15). In all cases of suspension, the offending person is still to be regarded as a brother or sister in Christ and as a member of the church (Cases include: an unrepentant private offender, divisive teaching or behavior, disorderly behavior, scandalous sin, or contempt of church discipline). At a stated meeting of the church, the pastors shall recommend that the offending member be suspended, specifying the grounds for their recommendation, which will be enacted by three-fourths of church members present and voting. If even after a period of suspension, the member remains adamant in sin, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in [Article 4.5.2](#) (Matt. 18:17b).

## ***Section 5. Termination of Membership***

### **Paragraph 1. By Resignation**

1. As a general rule, a member may voluntarily resign from membership in Grace Reformed Baptist Church.
2. Membership in Grace Reformed Baptist Church is entered into and commences mutually, by the voluntary commitment of the individual applicant and acceptance by the church, expressed in terms of the procedures described in [Article 4.2](#). Accordingly, it follows that members cannot terminate their memberships unilaterally under some circumstances (Matt. 18:18; See [Article 4.5.1.5](#)).
3. The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death and also may do so after he or she has voluntarily resigned and is joining another church.
4. The resigning member is to formally notify the elders of his or her resignation and plans for membership elsewhere (Heb. 13:17).
5. The congregation will be notified of resignations, generally at members' meetings. The church shall have authority to refuse a member's resignation, if necessary, for the purpose of proceeding with the process of church discipline or for any other biblical reason by three-fourths of the members present and voting.

6. Members of local churches are commanded to assemble regularly (Heb.10:23-25; See also [Article 4.3.1.2](#)). If a member ceases to regularly attend church services without just cause and proper communication (such as stated plans to return or plans to join another true church), and if the efforts by the elders to contact the member are unsuccessful, then after six consecutive weeks of the member's absence the church may proceed with formal discipline, if necessary (1 John 2:19).
7. According to 1 Cor. 5:12, the church only has authority over those who claim to belong to it. In the tragic situation where a church member decides for themselves that they are not a Christian or do not hold to apostolic doctrine and resigns from membership, the church will confirm by three-fourths vote of the members present to clarify that the church understands them to have abandoned the faith. Those who abandon the faith and yet refuse to resign are subject to excommunication ([Article 4.5.2](#)).
8. Those who have previously resigned membership and intend to rejoin Grace Reformed Baptist Church must seek membership again as outlined in [Article 4.2](#).

## **Paragraph 2. By Excommunication**

1. Membership may also be terminated as an act of excommunication. Excommunication is ordinarily contemplated after earnest private admonition regarding serious and demonstrable sin or heresy has failed, and there are no hopeful signs of repentance.
2. At a stated meeting of the church, the elders shall recommend that the offending member be excommunicated, specifying the grounds for their recommendation. Except in extreme cases, there will be no less than four (4) weeks between the report to the church and a church vote. This allows the church to make earnest efforts to bring the offender to true repentance and reformation. All acts of excommunication must be executed by the gathered church (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4). A member is excommunicated by the approval of at least three-fourths of the members present and voting.
3. Some expressions of sin (ethical or doctrinal) are so gross and heinous in nature, and some cases are so extreme that the preliminary actions to excommunicate are inappropriate. In such cases, the guilty member may be immediately excommunicated by the church (1 Cor. 5:1-5). The elders shall, in such cases, at any meeting of the church, recommend that the offending member be immediately excommunicated, specifying the grounds for their recommendation. An immediate act of excommunication shall be executed at that meeting by the gathered church (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4). A member is immediately excommunicated by the approval of at least three-fourths of the members present and voting. This severe measure is employed when aggravated lawlessness is discovered and there are no hopeful signs of repentance.
4. Grace Reformed Baptist Church does not exist in isolation but is part of the universal church of Christ, composed of all true churches. Accordingly, open and forthright communication among the churches is vital for the purity, peace, edification, and unity of the church universal. Therefore, at their discretion, the elders may disclose to other churches and denominational structures the circumstances under which a person's

membership was terminated, suspended, or subjected to public reproof. Beyond this, for the protection of Christ's churches, the elders will disclose to other churches and denominations when someone has been convicted of or has admitted to child sexual abuse.

5. In addition, this church does not exist in isolation from society at large. Accordingly, this church has both civil and moral obligations to society both to act with integrity and to maintain its testimony (2 Cor. 8:20-21). Therefore, at their discretion, the elders may disclose to other persons outside the ecclesiastical circles mentioned above or civil authorities the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated, suspended, or the reasons for a public reproof. (Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24; 1 Pet. 4:15). The elders are required by law to immediately disclose to civil authorities when there is reasonable suspicion of child abuse.

### **Paragraph 3. Restoration**

1. Those who humbly receive the words of reproof, acknowledge and confess their sin, and manifest a transformed life (Prov. 28:13) following a suspension, public reproof, or the admonishment of the church will afterward be publicly commended for their godly repentance (2 Cor. 2, 7:7-11).
  2. Repentant and transformed members will have suspended membership privileges restored upon the vote of at least three-fourths of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members.
  3. Those who have been excommunicated and subsequently exhibit godly repentance and manifest a transformed life will be forgiven and comforted (2 Cor. 2:5-11). They may have membership restored as outlined in [Article 4.2](#).
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## **Article 5 – Meetings**

### ***Section 1. Worship Meetings***

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.

### ***Section 2. The Ordinances in Worship Meetings***

#### **Paragraph 1. General Statement**

Christ has given two ordinances to His church, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Accordingly, our Lord is concerned that the ordinances be observed unto edification in a decent and orderly manner.

## **Paragraph 2. Baptism**

Baptism is the one-time declarative ordinance for confessing faith in Christ and is required for church membership. True disciples of Christ are proper candidates for baptism. The proper mode of baptism is by immersion in water and “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Under normal circumstances, those being baptized will also be joined to the church. Baptisms will occur as part of the worship service at a time designated by the elders. In a baptismal service, the candidate will make baptismal vows before the congregation.

## **Paragraph 4. The Lord's Supper**

The Lord’s Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church until He comes (1 Cor. 11:26). Under ordinary circumstances, it will be celebrated no less than once a month.

## **Paragraph 5. The Lord's Supper Polity**

The church welcomes all those believers who are members in good standing in evangelical, true churches to partake of the Lord's Supper. We encourage those with questions of conscience to seek pastoral guidance.

## ***Section 3. Members’ Meetings***

### **Paragraph 1. General Statement**

There shall be a regular members’ meeting (e.g., Family Meeting or Congregational Meeting), no less than once every quarter (but possibly more often) apart from public worship services. Both regular and special members’ meetings are for members only.

### **Paragraph 2. Notification**

Notices shall be given, through announcements made at regular worship services, a minimum of seven (7) days prior to regular members’ meetings at which official church business is to be conducted. However, in an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying the membership of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting.

### **Paragraph 3. Chairmanship**

A pastor, designated by the elders, shall preside as moderator at all members’ meetings. Upon occasion, the pastors may appoint a deacon to preside in their stead. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that any required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

### **Paragraph 4. Quorum**

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present.

### **Paragraph 5. Voting**

All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present. All members who are in good standing may vote on any question properly brought before the church. The results of votes will be reported to the church.

### **Paragraph 6. Special Meetings**

Special members' meetings may be called as required by the elders. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at the public services of the church no less than seven (7) days preceding the meeting. Special members' meetings may also be called by formal request, submitted to the elders, of twenty-five percent of the voting membership. For such formally requested meetings, the request must clearly state the subject matter and a proposed measure to be announced at the meeting. The elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request. These matters may be settled by a three-fourths majority vote of members present and voting.

## ***Section 4. Annual Budget Meetings***

### **Paragraph 1. General Statement**

The budget is an expression of our gospel vision, values, and identity as a church. The elders should seek the congregation's advice and support, respecting any major endeavor or significant expenditure, and should be willing to yield to the congregation when appropriate. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the elders' approval.

### **Paragraph 2. Staff Hires**

The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of pastoral staff members. The hiring of administrative staff may be delegated by the elders to the deacons. All staff are subject to the Constitution and additional policies maintained by the deacons.

### **Paragraph 3. Budget Presentation**

A budget shall be approved by the membership at a members' meeting not more than two (2) months after the start of the fiscal year. Each year, the elders, after consultation with the deacons and the membership, shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be presented for discussion at a specially called budget meeting.

### **Paragraph 4. Budget Approval**

There will be no less than a two (2) week period between the budget presentation and the congregational vote for respective consideration, for asking questions, and voicing concerns. Congregational approval shall proceed, without amendment, as a single vote on the budget in its entirety. A three-fourths majority vote of the members present at a regular or special members' meeting is required to pass a budget resolution. Prior to this approval and subject to

the elders' discretion, expenditures may begin at the new fiscal year's projected levels. If God's people are uniquely and providentially hindered from gathering for a vote, the elders and deacons may exercise emergency privileges to pay out the proposed budget's expenditures until the congregation can gather again. The elders and deacons must review the money already spent with the congregation, review the proposed budget, and submit it for a vote as outlined above.

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## **Article 6 – Officers**

### ***Section 1. Summary***

The Biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities. All officers must also affirm the Confession (see [Article 12](#) for allowable exemptions and additional required affirmations), strive to abide by the Church Covenant, and submit to the church's governance as disclosed in this Constitution.

### ***Section 2. Elders***

#### **Paragraph 1. Qualifications and Responsibilities of the Eldership**

The elders shall comprise men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The biblical terms “elder,” “pastor,” and “overseer” are understood to refer to the same biblical office. In the church, only qualified men may serve in the office and function of a pastor. No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure. The pastors are authorized and responsible for giving leadership and oversight to the church (Acts 20:17-35; 1 Pet. 5:1-2), including the preaching and teaching of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20-21, 27; Titus 1:9); the shepherding of the souls of the members of the church (Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 2:11; Heb. 13:17); and the directing of the church in all its tasks by setting general policy and by making specific decisions (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). Nonetheless, pastors must model the posture of servants before the congregation (Matt. 20:25-28; 1 Pet. 5:3). The length of their term of office shall not be fixed.

#### **Paragraph 2. Plurality of Elders**

The Scriptures teach that, ordinarily, there should be a plurality of pastors in each local church (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5). Therefore, the church should endeavor to formally recognize a plurality of men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite graces and gifts. The number of pastors shall not be fixed.

#### **Paragraph 3. Vocational Support**

In view of the diversity of gifts as well as the numerous and grave responsibilities of the office, it is highly desirable that at least one elder should devote himself full-time to the work of the ministry and the oversight of the church as his calling in life. The church is responsible for giving



adequate financial support to elders who labor in the Word, while others may fulfill the office as they maintain an ordinary vocation (Acts 18:3-5; 1 Cor. 9:9-11; 1 Tim 5:17-18).

## ***Section 3. Deacons***

### **Paragraph 1. Duties of Deacons**

Deacons are servants of the church. They are primarily responsible for organizing the benevolence ministry of the church and may also administer the ordinary business and secular affairs of the church, organize the budget, and any other responsibilities the pastors ask them to perform so that the pastors may devote themselves without distraction to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:3-4). Deacons are to review and update all additional adopted church policies and emergency protocols. The deacons must always fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and submission to the pastors. Neither the number of deacons nor the length of their term of service shall be fixed.

### **Paragraph 2. Qualifications**

We understand ordination to the office of deacon to be limited to men only (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim. 3:8-13), those who possess the qualifications cited in 1 Tim. 3:8-13. However, in light of the Bible's teaching on the office of deacon, the roles of women in the church, and the example of several prominent women in the New Testament, we believe that deacons should consult with and include certain godly and faithful women of the church in their diaconal work as appropriate. We believe the involvement of women as aids to deacons in the church is warranted by Scripture and is practically wise and helpful.

### **Paragraph 3. Diaconal Clerk**

It is the duty of a deacon to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church and render reports as requested by the pastors, the deacons, or the church. The clerk shall be a deacon and appointed by the deacons. The clerk ensures that the most recent revision of this Constitution shall be available for all church members.

### **Paragraph 4. Diaconal Treasurer**

One deacon will serve as treasurer. A 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 ensuring accurate information needed for the annual budget meeting is presented to the deacons and elders. The treasurer shall also ensure that complete and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books 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 elders and congregation, whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions and the church's financial condition. The deacons shall appoint the treasurer with the elders' approval and knowledge of the congregation.

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## **Article 7 – Elections**

### ***Section 1. Officer Nomination***

#### **Paragraph 1. Task of Recognition**

The process for church elections requires substantial prayer, both individually and corporately. Nominations to the office of elder or deacon are made by the elders after due investigation of their qualifications (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The elders may nominate one or more candidates to either office and, if needed, can call a special congregational business meeting for their consideration. The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. Likewise, members are free at any time to suggest to the elders the names of members whom they consider to be potential officers.

#### **Paragraph 2. Officer Nomination**

All nominations and elections of church officers must be made at a duly convened congregational meeting. Nominations of all officers must be announced to the congregation at least one (1) month prior to the vote.

### ***Section 2. Officer Installation***

#### **Paragraph 1. Officer Election**

The names of all officer nominees will be separately discussed and voted upon at a special or stated members' meeting. During the discussion, the officer nominee under consideration and members of their immediate family shall leave the presence of the church until the written ballot is taken. The nominee's scriptural qualifications shall be read with explanation given as needed and openly discussed in the fear of God and due respect for the nominee's reputation. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated elder candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the pastors prior to the meeting. Members intending to speak in opposition to an officer candidate at the stated meeting should express their objection to the pastors as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting. No fewer than three-fourths of those ballots cast by the members present and voting shall be required for election. This vote shall take place by written ballot after a full and free discussion oriented around the relevant Scriptural passages.

#### **Paragraph 2. Deacon Installation**

Elected deacons will then be installed by the laying on of the hands of the eldership at a worship service in front of the congregation. This solemn act should always be accompanied by the elders' prayers before the church (Acts 13:1-3). The laying on of the elders' hands shall signify the approval of a deacon elected.

### **Paragraph 3. Elder Installation**

Following the election of an elder, there shall be a portion of a regular worship service set aside, at which time the officer shall be installed. The elder will be installed by the laying on of the hands of the eldership in front of the congregation. This solemn act should always be accompanied by the special prayers of the elders before the church (Acts 13:1-3). The laying on of the elders' hands shall signify the approval of an elder elected.

## ***Section 3. Officer Dismissal***

### **Paragraph 1. Officer Resignation**

An officer may resign his office without prejudice if he does so in an orderly fashion and for good and valid reasons. This resignation, together with its reasons and the date upon which he wishes his resignation to be effective, shall be formally submitted to the elders of the church and subsequently read to the congregation at a members' meeting.

### **Paragraph 2. Non-culpable Incompetence**

In cases where it is determined that an officer is no longer competent to fulfill all the duties of the office but not in and of themselves culpable, it shall, in the absence of his resignation, be recommended by the elders to the congregation at a members' meeting that he be removed from office. No less than four (4) weeks shall be given for due congregational consideration prior to a vote. In order to retain his office, in such circumstances, the officer in question must receive a vote of confidence by no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting.

## ***Section 4. Officer or Staff Discipline***

### **Paragraph 1. Concerns About an Officer**

Most concerns should be handled according to our Lord's instructions in Matt. 18:15-17 and 1 Tim. 5:19-21. Except with criminal accusations ([Article 7.4.2](#)), should any members come to have objective concerns over the fitness of a particular church officer to continue, they should first address that officer privately. If their concerns continue after they have dealt privately with the officer in question, they should bring their concerns to the (other) elders. If there are no (other) elders, then they should approach the deacons. If necessary, the members may seek to call a special meeting per [Article 5.3.6](#).

### **Paragraph 2. Reporting Misconduct**

1. Any form of serious or blatant sin, scandalous behavior, sexual misconduct, substantial doctrinal error, illegal activity, or public misconduct by any officer or leader should be reported to the entire eldership, notwithstanding private confrontation, witnesses, or repentance.
2. Any suspected abuse or neglect of a minor should first be reported to the appropriate civil authorities without delay.

3. Due to the nature of child abuse allegations and the involvement of public authorities, the policy of the church is to make the congregation aware of these allegations involving any congregant or leader of the church without compromising the safety of the potential victim. This initial report will be made without the church weighing the credibility of the allegation or blindly accepting a charge. Enough facts will be shared that those who may have more information can help the investigation. If the accused is found guilty by proper public authorities, the congregation shall be notified. If the accused is likewise cleared, the congregation will be notified.

### **Paragraph 3. Investigation of an Officer**

In most cases, the remaining elders will investigate a charge against an officer(s). If there are no (other) elders, the deacons will investigate. Any single claim of suspected abuse or neglect of a minor by an officer will be immediately reported to and investigated by the proper civil and independent authorities. A charge against an elder will not be accepted as true except by admission or on the evidence of at least two or three confirming witnesses (1 Tim 5:19). Unsubstantiated claims (except as detailed in [Article 7.4.2](#)) will be dismissed. Minor matters and matters of opinion or perspective will be privately resolved or covered in love. However, verified, serious, blatant, and possibly unresolved charges make the elder subject to the disciplinary action of [Article 4.5.2](#).

### **Paragraph 4. Leave of Absence for Officers and Staff**

In some cases, an investigation regarding misconduct can be carried out while the officer or staff member carries on the duties of their role, perhaps with some alterations to their responsibilities. However, a paid leave of absence (for paid staff) may be necessary until the completion of the internal or independent investigation. A leave of absence is required for accused officers and staff during any criminal investigation. To avoid a prolonged and unresolved internal investigation, the total period of absence pending investigation may not exceed 60 days.

### **Paragraph 5. Elder Disciplinary Action**

Each elder is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same rules of discipline as all the church members. In addition, they are subject to public reprimand for serious and blatant sins (Gal. 2:14; 1 Tim. 5:20) and may be removed from office (1 Tim. 3:1), potentially even where there may have been repentance. An elder's term of office may be terminated by dismissal. A disqualified elder can be immediately dismissed by a three-fourths vote of the members present at a stated members' meeting. If the elder is unrepentant, the church shall also pursue church discipline as detailed in [Article 4.5.2](#).

### **Paragraph 6. Deacon Disciplinary Action**

Each deacon is under the oversight of their elders and is subject to the same rules of discipline as all the church members. In addition, they are subject to removal from office (1 Tim. 3:8-10), potentially even where there may have been repentance. A deacon's term of office may be

terminated by dismissal. A disqualified deacon can be immediately dismissed by a three-fourths vote of the members present at a stated members' meeting. If the deacon is unrepentant, the church shall also pursue church discipline as detailed in [Article 4.5.2](#).

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## **Article 8 – Indemnification**

### ***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 authorized agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the church 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. At the recommendation of the elders or deacons, this action is determined by a three-fourths majority vote of members present and voting at a stated members' meeting.

### ***Section 2. Permissive Indemnification***

At the recommendation of the elders or deacons, 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 elders or deacons is not available to recommend indemnification because of the number of elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made directly by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by a three-fourths vote of the members present at a stated members' meeting.

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## **Article 9 – Dispute Resolution**

### ***Section 1. Disputes***

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matt. 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 6:1-8), members should generally resolve ordinary civil conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. In the case of criminal activity within the congregation, the State has a God-given responsibility

and authority to protect the peace and security of its citizens that should be supported and encouraged.

### ***Section 2. Child Protection***

Grace Reformed Baptist Church must always have and abide by a Child Protection Policy to promote a safe and healthy environment for our children to learn and to provide guidelines on reporting misconduct. The policy must remain harmonized with North Carolina State Law and abide by North Carolina Mandatory Reporting in accordance with the Scriptures. The deacons, with elder oversight, will ensure the membership's continuous education and compliance with these policies. The policies must be made known and be available to the congregation and remain on file at the church. All members are subject to this policy and are required to abide by it.

### ***Section 3. Facility Policy***

Grace Reformed Baptist Church must always have and abide by explicit policies for the wise stewardship of God's gifts. The deacons, with elder oversight, will ensure compliance with these policies. The policies must be made known and be available to the congregation and remain on file at the church. All members are subject to these policies and are required to abide by them.

### ***Section 4. Board of Directors***

This church was incorporated under the laws of the state of North Carolina on May 13, 1986. While the Scriptures do not recognize a Board of Directors as a biblical church office, our Articles of Incorporation and By-laws require a Board of Directors to serve as legal representatives. The Board of Directors shall be the elders. If needed, the elders also retain authority to appoint other directors who shall be subject to the pastors. These representatives shall be made known to the congregation at a stated members' meeting.

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## **Article 10 – Inter-Church Relations**

### ***Section 1. Autonomy***

We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church (Eph. 5:23) and who directs the affairs of the church through elders (Acts 14:21-23; 1 Tim. 3:1f; Titus 1:5f) and congregational authority (Matt. 18:15-18, Gal. 1). The elders and congregation are at all times and in all activities under the authority of Scripture (Acts 16:4; 1 Cor. 7:17).

## ***Section 2. Cooperation***

The Church can, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God (2 Cor. 8:18-24). However, the decision of no other church or group of churches shall ever be binding on this church (Acts 14:21-23, with Heb. 13:17). Consideration for formal cooperation or membership with associations, conventions, or denominations requires a special informational meeting. This meeting must take place no less than four (4) weeks prior to a vote regarding formal cooperation or disassociation. Notification of this special meeting will be given during regular worship services at least seven days prior. No fewer than a three-fourths majority vote of those ballots cast by the members present shall be required for approval. This vote shall take place by written ballot subsequent to a full and free discussion.

## ***Section 3. Cooperative Participation***

Subsequent to the approval of formal cooperation, the eldership shall nominate messengers or representatives from among themselves or the church to official meetings necessitating authoritative representation. Each representative shall be a current member of the church. These representatives will be subsequently presented to the church who will vote to officially appoint, certify, and send the messengers or representatives (Acts 11:29-30; 15:2, 22; 2 Cor. 8:19; 1 Cor. 16:3). No fewer than a three-fourths vote of the members present shall be required for approval.

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## **Article 11 – Dissolution**

Should there exist a reasonable cause to dissolve the church, the elders or other remaining leadership shall propose to the congregation the pursuit of dissolution. Congregational approval of such a proposal, at a duly called congregational meeting for that purpose, is necessary for the dissolution process to begin. Upon a three-fourths vote of approval by members present of the leadership's recommendation to pursue dissolution, the congregation shall decide on the receiver or receivers of its assets, plan for, and actually dispose of the same within the guidelines defined in the following section of this paragraph. The congregation's last act shall be to acknowledge and certify that all its assets have been disposed of as specified herein. The dissolution shall proceed within these guidelines, which shall not be violated. All assets are to be disposed of, and all just debts paid. No member is to take possession of any assets or profit from their liquidation. The disposition of all assets, or the proceeds from their liquidation, shall be distributed to churches or ministries that spread the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, which we know shall exist somewhere according to God's promise until Christ returns (Matt. 16:18).



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## **Article 12 – Amendments**

### ***Section 1. General Statement***

#### **Paragraph 1. Amendment Proposal**

Any proposed amendments to the Church Covenant or Constitution must be offered formally to the congregation at least four (4) weeks prior to consideration at a members' meeting and be announced from the pulpit at the regular worship services two (2) successive Sundays prior to such vote.

#### **Paragraph 2. Amendment Approval**

The Church Covenant may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting. This Constitution may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting.

### ***Section 2. Exemptions to the Confession***

#### **Paragraph 1. General Statement**

Officers are required to have a more mature affirmation of the Confession, yet may have measured liberty in matters of wording, application, and nuance of specific paragraphs not essential to the chapter as a whole. As such, officers must affirm the entire Confession but may choose to avail themselves of any or all of the exemptions listed in [Paragraph 2](#) of this Section. Officers and officer candidates must formally submit to the eldership any other exemptions from the Confession they wish to request. Officer candidates must do so before nomination. Noteworthy exemptions for officers and officer candidates not already included in this Constitution are permitted only by the unanimous agreement of the eldership and by a Constitutional amendment ([Article 12.1.2](#)) ratified by the church before the officer's nomination.

#### **Paragraph 2. Exemptions Currently Recognized**

**Chapter 7: Of God's Covenant, Paragraphs 2 and 3.** We expect all officers to agree that God has one eternal plan of salvation that He progressively revealed in redemptive history through the biblical covenants (Heb. 8; Eph. 2:12; Gal. 4:24). All of God's promises are fulfilled in Christ and apply to Christ's new covenant church.

**Chapter 10: Of Effectual Calling, Paragraph 3.** We do not adopt the assertion of some editions of the Confession in Chapter 10, paragraph 3 that "infants dying in infancy are elect and regenerated," and choose rather to adhere to the more authentic confessional statement which reads, "Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit."

**Chapter 19: Of the Law of God, Paragraph 2.** Officers must affirm that all of Scripture is inspired by God and was written for the church's instruction. The Old Testament continues to apply to the church through its fulfillment in Christ, and its moral demands continue to apply to Christians through the new covenant.

**Chapter 22: Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day, Paragraphs 7 and 8.** We affirm the Regulative Principle described in Paragraph 1 of this Chapter alongside its necessary provision in Chapter 1, Paragraph 6. Officers and members may individually choose to adopt paragraphs 7 and 8, but we do not require it. However, officers and members are required to affirm no less than this statement on the Lord's Day:

From the beginning, God established a pattern for man to set apart a weekly day of rest for worship. The New Testament indicates that the first day of the week, Sunday, is the Lord's Day, commemorating the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It should primarily focus upon exercises of worship, spiritual edification, and acts of service, both public and private. Thus, we prepare for the rest that remains for the people of God.

Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3, 33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1, 19-28; Acts 20:7; Rom. 14:5-10; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Col. 2:16; 3:16; Rev. 1:10

**Chapter 26: Of the Church, Paragraph 4.** Although we hold that Romanism and the Papacy are antichristian, and although we acknowledge that the Pope could well be that man of sin, nevertheless, we do not adopt the assertion of some editions in Chapter 26, Paragraph 4 that the Pope of Rome "is that Antichrist, and man of sin," described in 2 Thess. 2:4f.

### ***Section 3. Additional Affirmations***

#### **Paragraph 1. The Sanctity of All Human Life**

We believe that God created people in His own image, and because of this, all people have inherent value. Human dignity extends equally to both the preborn and the elderly, male and female, single or married, and includes people of every nationality, race, ethnicity, physical condition, socioeconomic status, educational background, and condition of life.

Ex. 20:3-17; Ps. 101:5; Mic. 6:8; Zech. 8:16; Matt. 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 10:27-37; John 17:15; 1 Cor. 5:9-10; 7:20-24; Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:12-17; James 1:27; 2:8

## **Paragraph 2. Gender**

We believe that God created people male and female as the crowning jewel of His creation. Gender is both a wonderful gift and an unchangeable part of God's design, and it does not exist apart from the God-appointed link with one's biological sex.

Gen. 1:26-27, 3:1-19; Ps. 51:5; Isa. 64:6; Hos. 6:7; Rom. 1:18, 2:14, 3:10-18, 5:12-21, 6:16-17, 8:7-10; 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 15:45-50; Eph. 2:1-3, 4:18; Titus 3:3

## **Paragraph 3. Sexuality, Marriage, and Singleness**

We believe that God created marriage to reflect His glory and kindness to humanity made in His image and has only one definition: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive, lifelong union, as clearly defined by Scripture. God created males and females as compatible beings, and He alone has the right to determine the legitimate parameters of human sexuality. God has determined that sexual intimacy must occur only between one man and one woman united in the committed marriage relationship for mutual enjoyment and, as God blesses, for procreation. Though God has sanctified marriage with unique dignity and purpose in human relationships, singleness may be given as a gift of God or result from factors determined by the wise providence of God. As a local expression of Christ's body, the church, we affirm the dignity of singleness and encourage the unique capacity of single men and women to serve Jesus Christ in His kingdom.

Gen. 1:26-31; 2:18-25; Ex. 20:14; Prov. 31:11-12; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-18; 7:1-7, 32-34; Eph. 5:3, 24-29; 1 Thess. 3:4-6; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 13:4