

# **The Constitution of Grace Bible Church**

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Approved by the elders of Grace Bible Church on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

# The Statement of Faith<sup>1</sup>

## 1. THE SCRIPTURES

We believe that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," by which we understand the whole Bible is inspired in the sense that holy men of God "were moved by the Holy Spirit" to write the very words of Scripture. We believe that this divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the writings—historical, poetical, doctrinal, and prophetic—as appeared in the original manuscripts. We believe that the whole Bible in the originals is therefore without error. We believe that all the Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming, and hence that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read, or understood, until it leads to Him. We also believe that all the Scriptures were designed for our practical instruction (Mark 12:26, 36; 13:11; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 1:16; 17:2–3; 18:28; 26:22–23; 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 2:13; 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).

## 2. THE GODHEAD

We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and that these three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections, and worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence, and obedience (Matt. 28:18–19; Mark 12:29; John 1:14; Acts 5:3–4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 1:1–3; Rev. 1:4–6).

## 3. ANGELS, FALLEN AND UNFALLEN

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings, known as angels; that one, "the shining one, son of the morning"—the highest in rank—sinned through pride, thereby becoming Satan; that a great company of the angels followed him in his moral fall, some of whom became demons and are active as his agents and associates in the prosecution of his unholy purposes, while others who fell are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Isa. 14:12–17; Ezek. 28:11–19; 1 Tim. 3:6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).

We believe that Satan is the originator of sin, and that, under the permission of God, he, through subtlety, led our first parents into transgression, thereby accomplishing their moral fall and subjecting them and their posterity to his own power; that he is the enemy of God and the people of God, opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped; and that he who in the beginning said, "I will be like the most High," in his warfare appears as an angel of light, even counterfeiting the works of God by fostering religious movements and systems of doctrine, which systems in every case are characterized by a denial of the efficacy of the blood of Christ and of salvation by grace alone (Gen. 3:1–19; Rom. 5:12–14; 2 Cor. 4:3–4; 11:13–15; Eph. 6:10–12; 2 Thess. 2:4; 1 Tim. 4:1–3). We believe that Satan was judged at the Cross, though not then executed, and that he, a usurper, now rules as the "god of this world"; that, at the second coming of Christ, Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years, and after the thousand years he will be loosed for a little season and then "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone," where he "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Col. 2:15; Rev. 20:1–3, 10). We believe that a great company of angels kept their holy estate and are before the throne of God, from whence they are sent forth as ministering spirits to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Luke 15:10; Eph. 1:21; Heb. 1:14; Rev. 7:12). We believe that man was made lower than the angels; and that, in His incarnation, Christ took for a little time this lower place that He might lift the believer to His own sphere above the angels (Heb. 2:6–10).

## 4. MAN, CREATED AND FALLEN

We believe that man was originally created in the image and after the likeness of God, and that he fell through sin, and, as a consequence of his sin, lost his spiritual life, becoming dead in trespasses and sins, and that he became subject to the power of the devil. We also believe that this spiritual death, or total depravity of human nature, has been transmitted to the entire human race of man, the Man Christ Jesus alone being excepted; and hence that every child of Adam is born into the world with a nature which not only possesses no spark of divine life, but is essentially and unchangeably bad apart from divine grace (Gen. 1:26; 2:17; 6:5; Pss. 14:1–3; 51:5; Jer. 17:9; John 3:6; 5:40; 6:35; Rom. 3:10–19; 8:6–7; Eph. 2:1–3; 1 Tim. 5:6; 1 John 3:8).

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Dallas Theological Seminary

## **5. THE FIRST ADVENT**

We believe that, as provided and purposed by God and as preannounced in the prophecies of the Scriptures, the eternal Son of God came into this world that He might manifest God to men, fulfill prophecy, and become the Redeemer of a lost world. To this end He was born of the virgin, and received a human body and a sinless human nature (Luke 1:30–35; John 1:18; 3:16; Heb. 4:15).

We believe that, on the human side, He became and remained a perfect man, but sinless throughout His life; yet He retained His absolute deity, being at the same time very God and very man, and that His earth-life sometimes functioned within the sphere of that which was human and sometimes within the sphere of that which was divine (Luke 2:40; John 1:1–2; Phil. 2:5–8).

We believe that in fulfillment of prophecy He came first to Israel as her Messiah-King, and that, being rejected of that nation, He, according to the eternal counsels of God, gave His life as a ransom for all (John 1:11; Acts 2:22–24; 1 Tim. 2:6).

We believe that, in infinite love for the lost, He voluntarily accepted His Father's will and became the divinely provided sacrificial Lamb and took away the sin of the world, bearing the holy judgments against sin which the righteousness of God must impose. His death was therefore substitutionary in the most absolute sense—the just for the unjust—and by His death He became the Savior of the lost (John 1:29; Rom. 3:25–26; 2 Cor. 5:14; Heb. 10:5–14; 1 Pet. 3:18).

We believe that, according to the Scriptures, He arose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He had lived and died, and that His resurrection body is the pattern of that body which ultimately will be given to all believers (John 20:20; Phil. 3:20–21).

We believe that, on departing from the earth, He was accepted of His Father and that His acceptance is a final assurance to us that His redeeming work was perfectly accomplished (Heb. 1:3).

We believe that He became Head over all things to the church which is His body, and in this ministry He ceases not to intercede and advocate for the saved (Eph. 1:22–23; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1).

## **6. SALVATION ONLY THROUGH CHRIST**

We believe that salvation is a work of grace, and that God alone is responsible for saving us from our sins. We believe that, owing to universal death through sin, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again; and that no degree of reformation however great, no attainments in morality however high, no culture however attractive, no baptism or other ordinance however administered, can help the sinner to take even one step toward heaven; but a new nature imparted from above, a new life implanted by the Holy Spirit through the Word, is absolutely essential to salvation, and only those thus saved are sons of God. We believe, also, that our redemption has been accomplished solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin and was made a curse for us, dying in our room and stead; and that no repentance, no feeling, no faith, no good resolutions, no sincere efforts, no submission to the rules and regulations of any church, nor all the churches that have existed since the days of the Apostles can add in the very least degree to the value of the blood, or to the merit of the finished work wrought for us by Him who united in His person true and proper deity with perfect and sinless humanity (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 64:6; Matt. 26:28; John 3:7–18; Rom. 5:6–9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 6:15; Eph. 1:7; Phil. 3:4–9; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:18–19, 23).

We believe that the new birth of the believer comes only through faith in Christ and that repentance is a vital part of believing, and is in no way, in itself, a separate and independent condition of salvation; nor are any other acts, such as confession, baptism, prayer, or faithful service, to be added to believing as a condition of salvation (John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:29; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 1:16–17; 3:22, 26; 4:5; 10:4; Gal. 3:22).

We believe that when an unregenerate person exercises that faith in Christ which is illustrated and described as such in the New Testament, he passes immediately out of spiritual death into spiritual life, and from the old creation into the new; being justified from all things, accepted before the Father according as Christ His Son is accepted, loved as Christ is loved, having his place and portion as linked to Him and one with Him forever. Though the saved one may have occasion to grow in the realization of his blessings and to know a fuller measure of divine power

through the yielding of his life more fully to God, he is, as soon as he is saved, in possession of every spiritual blessing and absolutely complete in Christ, and is therefore in no way required by God to seek a so-called “second blessing,” or a “second work of grace” (John 5:24; 17:23; Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 3:21–23; Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10; 1 John 4:17; 5:11–12).

## **7. SANCTIFICATION**

We believe that sanctification, which is a setting-apart unto God, is threefold: It is already complete for every saved person because his position toward God is the same as Christ’s position. Since the believer is in Christ, he is set apart unto God in the measure in which Christ is set apart unto God. We believe, however, that he retains his sin nature, which cannot be eradicated in this life. Therefore, while the standing of the Christian in Christ is perfect, his present state is no more perfect than his experience in daily life. There is, therefore, a progressive sanctification wherein the Christian is to “grow in grace,” and to “be changed” by the unhindered power of the Spirit. We believe also that the child of God will yet be fully sanctified in his state as he is now sanctified in his standing in Christ when he shall see his Lord and shall be “like Him” (John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Eph. 4:24; 5:25–27; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 10:10, 14; 12:10).

## **8. ETERNAL SECURITY**

We believe that, because of the eternal purpose of God toward the objects of His love, because of His freedom to exercise grace toward the meritorious on the ground of the propitiatory blood of Christ, because of the very nature of the divine gift of eternal life, because of the present and unending intercession and advocacy of Christ in heaven, because of the immutability of the unchangeable covenants of God, because of the regenerating, abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all who are saved, we and all true believers everywhere, once saved shall be kept saved forever. We believe, however, that God is a holy and righteous Father and that, since He cannot overlook the sin of His children, He will, when they persistently sin, chasten them and correct them in infinite love; but having undertaken to save them and keep them forever, apart from all human merit, He, who cannot fail, will in the end present every one of them faultless before the presence of His glory and conformed to the image of His Son (John 5:24; 10:28; 13:1; 14:16–17; 17:11; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 6:19; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1–2; 5:13; Jude 24).

## **9. ASSURANCE**

We believe it is the privilege, not only of some, but of all who are born again by the Spirit through faith in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, to be assured of their salvation from the very day they take Him to be their Savior and that this assurance is not founded upon any fancied discovery of their own worthiness or fitness, but wholly upon the testimony of God in His written Word, exciting within His children filial love, gratitude, and obedience (Luke 10:20; 22:32; 2 Cor. 5:1, 6–8; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 10:22; 1 John 5:13).

## **10. THE HOLY SPIRIT**

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the blessed Trinity, though omnipresent from all eternity, took up His abode in the world in a special sense on the day of Pentecost according to the divine promise, dwells in every believer, and by His baptism unites all to Christ in one body, and that He, as the Indwelling One, is the source of all power and all acceptable worship and service. We believe that He never takes His departure from the church, nor from the feeblest of the saints, but is ever present to testify of Christ; seeking to occupy believers with Him and not with themselves nor with their experiences. We believe that His abode in the world in this special sense will cease when Christ comes to receive His own at the completion of the church (John 14:16–17; 16:7–15; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:22; 2 Thess. 2:7).

We believe that, in this age, certain well-defined ministries are committed to the Holy Spirit, and that it is the duty of every Christian to understand them and to be adjusted to them in his own life and experience. These ministries are the restraining of evil in the world to the measure of the divine will; the convicting of the world respecting sin, righteousness, and judgment; the regenerating of all believers; the indwelling and anointing of all who are saved, thereby sealing them unto the day of redemption; the baptizing into the one body of Christ of all who are saved, and the continued filling for power, teaching, and service of those among the saved who are yielded to Him and who are subject to His will (John 3:6; 16:7–11; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:30; 5:18; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 John 2:20–27).

We believe that some gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues and miraculous healings were temporary. We believe that speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism nor of the filling of the Spirit, and that the deliverance of the body from sickness or death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection (Acts 4:8, 31; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 13:8).

## **11. THE CHURCH, A UNITY OF BELIEVERS**

We believe that all who are united to the risen and ascended Son of God are members of the church which is the body and bride of Christ, which began at Pentecost and is completely distinct from Israel. Its members are constituted as such regardless of membership or nonmembership in the organized churches of earth. We believe that by the same Spirit all believers in this age are baptized into, and thus become, one body that is Christ's, whether Jews or Gentiles, and having become members one of another, are under solemn duty to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian differences, and loving one another with a pure heart fervently (Matt. 16:16–18; Acts 2:42–47; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12–27; Eph. 1:20–23; 4:3–10; Col. 3:14–15).

## **12. THE SACRAMENTS OR ORDINANCES**

We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only sacraments and ordinances of the church and that they are a scriptural means of testimony for the church in this age (Matt. 28:19; Luke 22:19–20; Acts 10:47–48; 16:32–33; 18:7–8; 1 Cor. 11:26).

## **13. THE CHRISTIAN WALK**

We believe that we are called with a holy calling, to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and so to live in the power of the indwelling Spirit that we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. But the flesh with its fallen, Adamic nature, which in this life is never eradicated, being with us to the end of our earthly pilgrimage, needs to be kept by the Spirit constantly in subjection to Christ, or it will surely manifest its presence in our lives to the dishonor of our Lord (Rom. 6:11–13; 8:2, 4, 12–13; Gal. 5:16–23; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 2:1–10; 1 Pet. 1:14–16; 1 John 1:4–7; 3:5–9).

## **14. THE CHRISTIAN'S SERVICE**

We believe that divine, enabling gifts for service are bestowed by the Spirit upon all who are saved. While there is a diversity of gifts, each believer is energized by the same Spirit, and each is called to his own divinely appointed service as the Spirit may will. In the apostolic church there were certain gifted men—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—who were appointed by God for the perfecting of the saints unto their work of the ministry. We believe also that today some men are especially called of God to be evangelists, pastors and teachers, and that it is to the fulfilling of His will and to His eternal glory that these shall be sustained and encouraged in their service for God (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4–11; Eph. 4:11).

We believe that, wholly apart from salvation benefits which are bestowed equally upon all who believe, rewards are promised according to the faithfulness of each believer in his service for his Lord, and that these rewards will be bestowed at the judgment seat of Christ after He comes to receive His own to Himself (1 Cor. 3:9–15; 9:18–27; 2 Cor. 5:10).

## **15. THE GREAT COMMISSION**

We believe that it is the explicit message of our Lord Jesus Christ to those whom He has saved that they are sent forth by Him into the world even as He was sent forth of His Father into the world. We believe that, after they are saved, they are divinely reckoned to be related to this world as strangers and pilgrims, ambassadors and witnesses, and that their primary purpose in life should be to make Christ known to the whole world (Matt. 28:18–19; Mark 16:15; John 17:18; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:18–20; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11).

## **16. THE BLESSED HOPE**

We believe that, according to the Word of God, the next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy will be the coming of the Lord in the air to receive to Himself into heaven both His own who are alive and remain unto His coming, and also all who have fallen asleep in Jesus, and that this event is the blessed hope set before us in the Scripture, and

for this we should be constantly looking (John 14:1–3; 1 Cor. 15:51–52; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Titus 2:11–14).

## **17. THE TRIBULATION**

We believe that the translation of the church will be followed by the fulfillment of Israel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 6:1–19:21) during which the church, the body of Christ, will be in heaven. The whole period of Israel's seventieth week will be a time of judgment on the whole earth, at the end of which the times of the Gentiles will be brought to a close. The latter half of this period will be the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7), which our Lord called the great tribulation (Matt. 24:15–21). We believe that universal righteousness will not be realized previous to the second coming of Christ, but that the world is day by day ripening for judgment and that the age will end with a fearful apostasy.

## **18. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**

We believe that the period of great tribulation in the earth will be climaxed by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth as He went, in person on the clouds of heaven, and with power and great glory to introduce the millennial age, to bind Satan and place him in the abyss, to lift the curse which now rests upon the whole creation, to restore Israel to her own land and to give her the realization of God's covenant promises, and to bring the whole world to the knowledge of God (Deut. 30:1–10; Isa. 11:9; Ezek. 37:21–28; Matt. 24:15–25:46; Acts 15:16–17; Rom. 8:19–23; 11:25–27; 1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:1–5; Rev. 20:1–3).

## **19. THE ETERNAL STATE**

We believe that at death the spirits and souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the glorified body when Christ comes for His own, whereupon soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in glory; but the spirits and souls of the unbelieving remain after death conscious of condemnation and in misery until the final judgment of the great white throne at the close of the millennium, when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power (Luke 16:19–26; 23:42; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 2 Thess. 1:7–9; Jude 6–7; Rev. 20:11–15).

# **The By-Laws of Grace Bible Church**

We, the members of Grace Bible Church, in orderly manner, do hereby establish the following principles by which we mutually agree to be governed in the affairs of our local church.

## **1. Characteristics of the church**

### **1.1 Identification of the Church**

The name of this church shall be Grace Bible Church of Frederick County.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Church**

The purpose of this church shall be to glorify God. We shall strive to accomplish this purpose through worship, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, discipling believers, prayer, fellowship, service, giving, and mutual edification.

### **1.3 Independence of the Church**

Grace Bible Church shall be a completely autonomous church as it relates to its organization and the administration of all its affairs. This church shall be governed by the elders of the church.

## **2. Membership**

### **2.1 Active membership**

Individuals of at least 18 years of age shall be received into active membership of Grace Bible Church after giving testimony of having been saved through personal faith in Jesus Christ. A prerequisite for membership shall also be the public identification with Christ through baptism by immersion, and by a pledge to abide by the contents of this church constitution. This shall be accomplished through an interview of at least 2 elders. Members shall be presented to the church by the elders.

The Elders may waive the requirement for baptism by immersion and recommend a candidate for church membership should some physical condition hinder the act of baptism by immersion.

Those active members who have absented themselves from the worship services of this church for a period of four weeks without reasonable explanation shall be declared inactive by the Elders. Inactive members shall have no vote in congregational meetings, nor shall they hold any church office.

It shall be the responsibility of inactive members who seek to be restored to active membership to initiate an interview with the elders of the church. Should inactive members refuse to seek restoration to active membership after 3 months, they shall be removed from membership by the elders.

An active member shall be immediately removed from membership if they request such an action, or if they have moved out of the area and can no longer attend regularly, or if they have begun to regularly attend other churches.

### **2.2 Associate membership**

In addition to active membership, Grace Bible Church makes provision for associate membership. This designation is for people who cannot regularly attend Grace Bible Church but who wish to continue their relationship with the church. This designation is reserved for members who have gone to the mission field, for those in the military who become stationed outside of the area, for members who go off to college outside of the area, and for those who suffer a long term illness keeping them from attending services. Associate members are not eligible to vote on any issue within the church.

### **2.3 Discipline of Members**

Members of Grace Bible Church who continue in unrepentant sin shall be subject to church discipline. The goal of this discipline is always the restoration of the believer to God. Unrepentant members shall be first admonished and if this does not result in repentance, the elders shall remove them completely from the membership of Grace Bible

Church and inform the active members of their decision. These actions by the elders are based on the teaching of the New Testament (1 Cor. 5; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Matthew 18:15-18; Titus 3:10; Romans 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Thess. 5:12-14; 2 Thess. 6:6-11).

Those removed from membership by virtue of church discipline shall be reinstated to membership after evidence of repentance and approval by all the elders.

### **3. Church Offices**

The permanent offices in the church organization are those of Elders, Pastor, and Deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Acts 20:17-28, Eph. 4:11, Phil. 1:1). We see these three as the only recognized offices in the New Testament church with the understanding that Pastor is a gift and that such a man is an Elder. These offices shall be filled from the membership of this church with the exception of the senior pastor which may be filled from outside of the church membership.

#### **3.1 The Elders of the Church**

The Elders shall be the governing body of the church.

##### **3.1.1 Selection of Elders**

There shall be as many Elders of the church as there are scripturally qualified men appointed by the Holy Spirit and willing to serve. The Elders of the church shall carefully examine a man by the scriptural qualifications. If there is unanimous agreement among the Elders of the church, the man's name will be brought before the next congregational meeting by the Elders to have his appointment ratified. Upon the presentation and description of the candidate's qualifications to the congregation, the vote will be taken. The Elders will weigh the vote of the congregation. If a majority of the congregation approves the candidate and the Elders are still in unanimous agreement that the Holy Spirit has so led, the individual shall be set apart to the position of Elder in a public service of the church.

##### **3.1.2 Qualifications of Elders**

An Elder must be an active member of the church, a man of mature spiritual experience and understanding, capable of shepherding God's people and overseeing God's work. He must meet the scriptural qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

##### **3.1.3 Scripturally defined Duties of Elders**

The Elders shall take overall supervision of the matters of the church with special focus on the spiritual interests of the church and shall assist the pastor in the performance of all his duties. Specifically,

1. The Elders shall consult together regarding doctrinal questions that arise in the church (Acts 15:4-6).
2. The Elders shall seek to protect the church from those who would teach false doctrine (Acts 20:29-31).
3. The Elders shall lead the way in helping the needy (Acts 20:35).
4. The Elders shall admonish those who stir up trouble in the church (1 Thess. 5:10-12).
5. The Elders are to direct the affairs of the church (1 Timothy 3:5; 5:17).
6. The Elders shall oversee the preaching and teaching ministry of the church (1 Timothy 5:17).
7. The Elders are to keep watch over the spiritual well being of individuals within the church (Heb. 13:17).
8. The Elders are to pray for the sick (James 5:14).
9. The Elders are to care for the church the way a shepherd cares for his flock (1 Peter 5:1,2).
10. The Elders are to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3).

### **3.1.4 Organizationally defined Duties of Elders**

1. The Elders are responsible to lead the church in such a way as to equip the church to fulfill its stated purpose. The Elders shall oversee all ministries, officers, and programs of the church.
2. The Elders shall coordinate goals for the church and plan for their realization.
3. The Elders shall share responsibility for the pastoral oversight and care of the congregation.
4. The Elders shall oversee the work of the committees of the church. They shall annually appoint one of their own number to chair each committee of the church, except where that responsibility has been delegated to a qualified deacon. The Elders shall serve as ex-officio members of all committees.
5. When it is expedient to do so, the Elders may delegate responsibilities to qualified deacons.
6. The Elders shall prepare and present an annual budget for congregational approval.
7. The Elders shall assist in administering the church ordinances.
8. The Elders shall meet at least monthly, and as often as necessary, to effectively carry out their work. A quorum shall consist of two thirds of the active Elders.
9. The Elders shall consider the question of additional ministerial staff when the need arises and present their finding to the congregation for approval.
10. The Elders shall develop and administer policies consistent with this Constitution.
11. The Elders shall receive, consider, and recommend to the church all amendments to this Constitution.
12. The Elders shall assume responsibility regarding the reception, care, and termination of members.
13. The Elders shall examine and recommend to the church all candidates for commissioning, licensing, and ordaining.
14. The Elders shall consider recommendation regarding the support of new missionary candidates and organizations, and bring such before the church as they deem wise.
15. The Elders shall nominate all officers for congregational approval.
16. The Elders shall be responsible for all staff evaluations and salary recommendations.

### **3.1.5 Tenure of Elders**

An Elder's term shall be indefinite. An Elder may resign his office by giving written notice to the Elders of the church. He may also be removed from office by the vote of the active members of the church for serious neglect of constitutional duties as determined by a majority of the elders. Prior to such action the Elders shall provide him with a written statement of the complaints against him and allow him a reasonable time to improve in the performance of his duties. If there is not satisfactory improvement the Elders shall recommend his dismissal to the active members at a special meeting of the church called for that purpose. A majority vote of the active members present at this meeting shall be required for his removal.

An Elder may be relieved of his duties immediately when charges against him of immorality or doctrinal infidelity have been thoroughly investigated and proved to the satisfaction of a majority of the Elders of the church. In such a case, the Elders shall provide a written statement of the charges against the Elder and allow opportunity for him to speak in his own defense.

An Elder may be temporarily relieved of his official duties by taking a sabbatical with the approval of the other Elders. The other Elders may give an Elder who has served with distinction for a number of years the title Elder Emeritus. An Elder Emeritus will retain his standing as an Elder of the church but will be relieved of his organizationally defined duties and will not have a vote at meetings of the Elders of the church.

## **3.2 The Pastor**

Throughout these By-Laws, unless otherwise stated, the term Pastor refers to the Senior Pastor of the Church.

### **3.2.1 Calling a Pastor.**

In filling a vacancy in the pastorate, the Elders shall investigate all prospective candidates for the pastorate before presenting same to the church. When a man is called to candidate, he shall be interviewed by the elders and be made familiar with the Doctrinal Statement and By-Laws of this church. When a potential candidate is found by the elders, they shall undertake prayerful consideration of the candidate. If there is unanimous agreement among the Elders of the church, the candidate will be brought before the church for consideration. A special meeting of the church shall be called for the purpose of voting by secret ballot of active members whether to call the candidate. The Elders shall weigh the vote of the church. If a majority approves the candidate, and the Elders are still unanimous in their agreement that the Holy Spirit has so led, the Elders shall extend a call on behalf of the church. Should the candidate not be extended a call or should the call be refused, the elders should seek out another acceptable candidate.

### **3.2.2 Qualifications.**

A Pastor must be a man of mature spiritual experience and understanding, capable of shepherding God's people and overseeing God's work. He must meet the scriptural qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

### **3.2.3 The Duties of the Pastor.**

The Pastor will serve as an Elder of the church. It shall be the duty of the pastor to preach the word of God and work hard with the other elders to accomplish the purpose of the church. The Pastor shall be considered a member of all committees, offices, and organizations of the church.

### **3.2.4 Tenure of the Pastor.**

The Pastor's term shall be indefinite. The Pastor may resign his office by giving at least one month written notice to the Elders of the church. He may also be removed from office by the vote of the active members of the church for serious neglect of constitutional duties as determined by the majority of the elders. Prior to such action the Elders shall provide him with a written statement of the complaints against him and allow him a reasonable time to improve in the performance of his duties. If there is not satisfactory improvement the Elders shall recommend his dismissal to the active members at a special meeting of the church called for that purpose. A majority vote of the active members present at this meeting shall be required for his removal.

A Pastor may be relieved of his duties immediately when charges against him of immorality or doctrinal infidelity have been thoroughly investigated and proved to the satisfaction of a majority of the Elders of the church. In such a case, the Elders shall provide a written statement of the charges against the Pastor and allow opportunity for him to speak in his own defense. Termination of the Pastor by the Elders shall be immediate. When such action is taken, a discreet explanation will be made to the membership as soon as possible at a special meeting called for that purpose.

### **3.2.5 Other Pastoral Staff.**

Other permanent or temporary pastoral positions may be created as needed by the church. The creation of a permanent pastoral position, associate pastor or assistant pastor, shall be made by the Elders. Any position so created by the elders shall be filled by the appointment of the Pastor with the consent of the Elders. The initial salary shall be set by the Elders. All associate/assistant pastors shall serve at the pleasure of the Pastor.

### **3.3 The Deacons**

Following the New Testament pattern, Deacons are those who perform various services of a practical, temporal, or material nature to the body of Christ, relieving the Elders of responsibilities which might detract from their ministry of spiritual oversight.

#### **3.3.1 Qualifications of Deacons**

The Deacons of the church shall be comprised of men who are active and faithful members of the church and who meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. They shall be men who have been tested and shown to possess a servant spirit prior to becoming Deacons.

#### **3.3.2 Selection of Deacons**

There shall be as many Deacons as necessary to aid the Elders of the church in effectively carrying out the work of the church. According to the need determined by the Elders, names of qualified individuals shall be brought by the Elders before the membership at the annual meeting for a vote of approval. The Elders will weigh the vote of the congregation. If a majority of the congregation approves the candidate and the Elders are still in unanimous agreement that the Holy Spirit has so led, the individual shall be set apart to the position of Deacon in a public service of the church. The term for each deacon shall be indefinite.

A Deacon may be relieved of his duties immediately when charges against him of immorality or doctrinal infidelity have been thoroughly investigated and proved to the satisfaction of a majority of the Elders of the church. In such a case, the Elders shall provide a written statement of the charges against the Deacon and allow opportunity for him to speak in his own defense. A Deacon may be temporarily relieved of his official duties by taking a sabbatical with the approval of the Elders.

#### **3.3.3 Duties of the Deacons**

The Deacons will administer benevolence to those members of the church who are in need. This benevolence will be governed by established policies and procedures. The Deacons shall annually elect their own chairman and secretary.

### **4. Committees**

The following committees shall exist as determined the elders.

#### **4.1 The Missions Committee**

The Missions Committee shall be responsible for promoting all of the mission related activities of the church.

##### **4.1.1 Selection of Missions Committee Members**

The Missions Committee shall be comprised of active and faithful members of the church. They shall be appointed to an indefinite term by the Elders of the church. They shall possess a deep love for missions and a desire to see the work of global ministry promoted within the church. The Elders shall oversee this committee and one of their own shall be chairman.

##### **4.1.2 Duties of the Missions Committee**

It shall be the duties of the committee to strengthen and promote the missionary interest of the church and to encourage the church to pray for the Church missions program. This work shall be carried out according to the missions policy of the church. It is expected of the committee to have an approximate knowledge of the work being done by our missionaries and also a knowledge of the approximate amounts they are receiving from other churches or organizations. The Missions Committee shall give a quarterly report to the Elders reflecting the current status of missionaries and their support. A quarterly report shall be given by the Missions Committee to the congregation of the church. The elders will determine all financial matters of the support of missionaries.

## **4.2 The Building and Grounds Committee**

The Building and Grounds committee is responsible for maintaining the church physical and real property.

### **4.2.1 Selection of the Building and Grounds Committee**

The Building and Grounds Committee shall be comprised of men who are active and faithful members of the church. They shall be appointed to an indefinite term by the Elders of the church because they possess a deep desire to serve the church through caring for the facilities that God has given the church. The Elders shall oversee this committee and one of their own shall chair this committee.

### **4.2.2 Duties of the Building and Grounds Committee**

It shall be the duty of the Building and Grounds Committee to provide for the needs of the church plant and see that the church property, of whatever kind, is cared for and rendered in every way the most serviceable to the church and congregation.

## **5. Meetings of the Church**

Grace Bible Church shall meet each Sunday for corporate worship, namely praise, prayer, fellowship, thanksgiving, giving, and instruction in God's word.

The elders shall add additional services and ministries as appropriate.

The church shall meet annually for the presentation of the budget, and the election of officers as may be necessary. This business meeting shall be held on the first Sunday of December each year. The fiscal year of the church shall be from January 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Special business meetings of the church may be called by the Elders. Notice for any called business meeting shall be posted and announced no later than two weeks prior to the meeting.

Twenty percent of the active members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The Elders shall maintain a current list of active members of the church.

## **6. Procedure for Amending the Constitution**

These By-Laws may be altered or amended only by notice of proposed change being given one month previous, in writing, and due notice given from the pulpit of proposed changes on two preceding Sundays. Any proposed amendment must be ratified by a majority of those voting at a congregational meeting of the church, specifically called for this purpose. Any proposed amendment must first be approved by the Elders.

## **7. Corporate Provisions**

### **7.1 Finances**

Grace Bible Church shall be supported by the free-will offerings of God's people. 1 Corinthians 16:2 and 2 Corinthians 9:7.

### **7.2 Officers**

For corporate and legal purposes the Elders shall be considered trustees of the church.

### **7.3 Real Estate**

No real estate belonging to the church shall ever be sold, mortgaged, or in any manner encumbered with, or made liable for any debt or obligation to pay money except upon the approval of congregation at an annual meeting of the church or special meeting called for that purpose. In case of buying, selling, or mortgaging church property, a written notice of such recommendation shall have been read and posted on at least two Sundays prior to the time of

the congregational meeting. A majority vote of 75 percent of active members present shall be required for acceptance of such recommendations.

#### **7.4 Dissolution**

In the event that the Grace Bible Church is dissolved, it will be done in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland. The assets of the church, after paying or making provision for the payment of all of the church's liabilities, will be distributed exclusively for the missions organizations supported by the Grace Bible Church. If no such missions organizations are supported at the time of dissolution, the monies shall be distributed to Baptist Bible Seminary of Clark's Summit, PA.