

Constitution and By-Laws of Grace Covenant Baptist Church

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Grace Covenant Baptist Church, in order to preserve the principles of our faith and to promote the peace, harmony, and edification of the Body of Christ, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this church shall be “Grace Covenant Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama.”

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures through:

- God-centered worship
- Prayer to God in all things
- Expository preaching of the whole counsel of God, including the doctrines of grace and all other doctrines of Scripture.
- Active evangelism
- Worldwide missions
- Biblical discipleship
- Biblical church discipline
- Fellowship with believers of every race, age, and social standing
- Compassionate ministry to the poor and needy

To this end we are committed to proclaiming God’s perfect Law and his glorious Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world, and to defending the “faith once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

ARTICLE III: ARTICLES OF FAITH

In order to fully express our faith to the world and to demonstrate our commitment to the heritage and mission of the Southern Baptist Convention, we do hereby adopt as our confessions of faith the *Charleston Confession of Faith* (also known as the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* of 1689), the confession held by the churches and all 293 delegates that established the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845; and *The Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000.

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 shall be subscribed to and accepted voluntarily by members as they offer themselves for membership. The *Charleston Confession of Faith* (as amended below) shall be subscribed to and accepted voluntarily by all who are called by the church to the offices of elder and deacon. Normally, other church members who are appointed to teach shall likewise subscribe to the *Charleston Confession of Faith*, though the Elders may appoint those who agree to teach nothing contrary to it. This ancient document is a most excellent summary of those things most surely believed among us. We accept the same, not as an authoritative rule or code of faith, whereby we are

fettered, but as an assistance to us in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. In this confession the members of our church will have a body of Divinity in small compass and by means of scriptural proofs will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15). We do, however, amend the confession as indicated below.

A. Revise Chapter 20, concerning the Gospel, to add the following additional paragraph:

5 It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

(Gen. 12:1-3; Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 6:1-8; Matt. 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24: 14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8, 16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Rom. 10:13-15; Eph. 3:1-11; 1 Thes. 1:8; 2 Tim 4:5; Heb. 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Pet. 2:4-10; Rev. 22:17)

B. Revise Chapter 22, paragraphs 7 and 8, concerning the Sabbath, to read:

7 As it is the law of nature, that in general a proportion of time, by God's appointment, be set apart for the worship of God, so by his Word, in a positive commandment, he particularly appointed one day in seven for a sabbath to be kept holy unto him, which in the old covenant was the last day of the week. From the resurrection of Christ, he hath set apart the first day of the week, which is called the Lord's day, the observation of the last day of the week being abolished.

8 The Lord's day is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs aforehand, observe an holy rest, from their own works, words, and thoughts, about their worldly employment and recreations, and are taken up in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

C. Revise and move Chapter 23, concerning the singing of praise, so that it becomes paragraph 9 of Chapter 22.

D. Revise Chapter 26, paragraph 4, concerning the Head of the church, after the word "manner," to read:

neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is an antichrist, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

ARTICLE IV: CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We pledge, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to 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 through all nations.

We pledge also to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk discreetly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our obligations, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all gossiping, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from all appearance of evil; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We pledge further to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We pledge moreover to unite as soon as possible with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word when we remove from this place.

ARTICLE V: CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Section 1. Church Authority.

Jesus Christ is Lord and Head of this church. His will as expressed in the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, is the sole authority in matters of faith and practice.

Section 2. Church Polity.

The government of this church is vested in the body of members who compose the church and as further defined in the By-Laws. The church is subject to no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation in accordance with *The Charleston Confession*, Chapter 26, paragraphs 14-15.

ARTICLE VI: AMENDMENTS

This Constitution and its By-Laws may be amended at any business meeting provided the proposed changes are made available in writing to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the aforesaid business meeting. An amendment may be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the regular members present and voting at the business meeting.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Qualifications

The membership of this church shall consist only of those who have given a credible profession of faith in Christ Jesus as Lord. Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized by immersion as a believer, and who subscribes to and accepts voluntarily the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, the church covenant, the aims, and the government of this church, shall be eligible for membership. However, due to differing ages, degrees of maturity and intellectual ability, each candidate shall be tenderly, lovingly, and carefully nurtured in his understanding of these membership qualifications.

Section 2. Types of Membership

A. Regular

All who are received into the membership of this church according to the procedures set forth in Section 3 of this Article shall be considered regular members of this church and entitled to all the rights and privileges, and subject to all the responsibilities and discipline, of membership unless their status is changed by one of the conditions set forth in Section 4 of this Article or Section 2 of Article II.

B. Associate

Members of other churches of like faith and order (i.e., churches which practice believer's baptism by immersion and which confess those doctrines essential for salvation) who come to live in our area for a limited period of time (e.g. students, military personnel, etc.) or who, for some other credible reason, desire to fellowship temporarily with this church may be received into the membership without being released from membership in their "home" churches. Such persons will be entitled to all the rights and privileges (excepting the right to vote or stand for office), and subject to all the responsibilities and discipline, of membership while in our midst. When such persons terminate their stay in our area, or upon their request, they will be released to the fellowship of their "home" churches and no longer regarded as associate members of this church.

Section 3. Reception of Members

A. Methods of Application

Any person meeting the requirements set forth in Section 1 of this Article may apply for membership in one of the following ways as appropriate:

1. *By Profession of Faith and Baptism.* This method is appropriate for those who have been recently converted to faith in Christ and/or have never been scripturally baptized.

2. *By Letter of Recommendation.* Those who are members in good standing (i.e., not under church discipline) of other churches of like faith and order may be received upon the written recommendation of that church.

3. *By Statement of Faith.* This method is appropriate for those who have been baptized by immersion in another church of like faith and order, but whose churches have lost the records of their membership, and for those who were excommunicated from (or are otherwise not in good standing with) a church of like faith and order, but have since repented of the sin which led to their dismissal, and whose reconciliation with that church is not practicable (for reason to be validated by the Elders).

Such a person may be received by making a public statement of his faith in Christ, his baptism, and his agreement to the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* and the covenant and government of this church.

B. Method of Reception

When a person requests church membership, at least two Elders (or, in the absence of a plurality of Elders, deacons or teachers) of the church shall meet with the applicant as soon as possible. The applicant shall be examined concerning his Christian experience and doctrinal beliefs. He shall be provided a copy of the church's Constitution and By-Laws, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, and the *Charleston Confession*, and these documents shall be thoroughly discussed. The applicant must complete a membership class (or an alternative curriculum of study to be determined by the Elders). When the Elders concur that the applicant meets the requirements for church membership, the applicant shall be baptized (if necessary) and recommended to the church for membership at a regular worship service. At the next regular business meeting, the church may receive the applicant as a member by a three-fourths majority vote of the regular members present and voting.

Section 4. Termination of Membership

Under certain circumstances, the church may terminate the membership of a member. Termination may take place in one of the following ways:

A. By Death

When a member of the church is removed by the Lord through physical death, his name shall be transferred to the file of former members.

B. By Transfer

When a member in good standing moves to another area and/or requests transfer of membership to another church of like faith and order for good cause, a letter of recommendation shall be granted such persons by vote of the church, and his membership shall be terminated.

C. By Failure to Attend for One Year

When a member, without good cause, has not attended any church meetings for a period of one year, his membership shall be automatically terminated.

D. By Excommunication

When a member has been disciplined by the church by excommunication, his membership is thereby terminated until such time as he is restored to fellowship in accordance with Article II, Section 2.B., below.

ARTICLE II: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Section 1. Purposes of Church Discipline

Recognizing that the Redeemed of Christ continue to struggle with indwelling sin (Rom. 7:13-24; 1 John 1:7-9), and out of a love for Christ and a longing to be conformed more perfectly to his image (Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Cor. 3:18), it shall be the policy of this church to follow biblical principles of church discipline, following the example of our heavenly Father who lovingly disciplines his children (Heb. 12:5-11). The purpose of such discipline is for:

The glory of God by reflecting his holy character.

(Deut. 5:11; I Kings 11:2; II Chron. 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Neh. 9:2; Is. 52:11; Ezek. 36:20; Mt. 5:16; John 15:8; 18:17, 25; Rom. 2:24; 15:5-6; II Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 1:4; 5:27; I Pet. 2:12)

The repentance, reconciliation and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined.

(Prov. 15:5; 29:15; I Cor. 4:14; Eph. 6:4; I Tim. 3:4-5; Heb. 12:1-11; Ps. 119:115; 141:5; Prov. 17:10; 25:12; 27:5; Ecc. 7:5; Mt. 7:26-27; 18:15-17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; I Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:1-5; II Thes. 3:6, 14-15; I Tim. 1:20; Tit. 1:13-14; Jas. 1:22)

The instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them.

(Prov. 13:20; Rom. 15:14; I Cor. 5:11; 15:33; Col. 3:16; I Thes. 5:14; I Tim. 5:20; Tit. 1:11; Heb. 10:24-25)

The purity of the church as a whole.

(I Cor. 5:6-7; II Cor. 13:10; Eph. 5:27; II John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21:2)

The good of our corporate witness to non-Christians.

(Prov. 28:7; Mt. 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:1-14; Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 3:7; II Pet. 2:2; I John 3:10)

Section 2. Methods of Church Discipline

When a brother or sister is perceived guilty of sin or heresy, the church shall follow the procedures laid down by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-20.

When so required by biblical principle, the church shall invoke the following methods of discipline:

A. Suspension

Suspension involves the temporary removal of all or some of the privileges of church membership. There are two cases in which the membership privileges of a church member may be suspended:

1. If a member is habitually absent from the meetings of the church without good cause, the Elders may recommend that his membership be suspended until such time as he re-establishes his commitment to the church's covenant and his submission to pastoral oversight. The church may suspend membership by a two-thirds majority of the regular members present and voting at a duly called business meeting. Such suspension may be lifted upon the recommendation of the Elders and the vote of the church.

2. If a member has publicly sinned, but shows hopeful signs of repentance, then severe discipline such as excommunication would be improper. Nevertheless, serious offenses may not be overlooked altogether. Therefore, upon the recommendation of the Elders, the church may suspend for a designated time all or some of the membership privileges of such a member by a two-thirds majority of the regular members present and voting at a duly called business meeting. Those who submit to such discipline are to be wholly forgiven and received as brethren.

B. Excommunication

If the brother or sister persists unrepentant in serious sin or heresy, the Elders shall recommend that such an unrepentant member be excommunicated from the fellowship of the church in the hope that such action may lead to godly repentance. Excommunication involves the termination of church membership and treatment of the excommunicated member as an unbeliever. The church may excommunicate a member by a two-thirds majority of the regular members present and voting at a duly called business meeting. When an excommunicated member gives evidence of repentance, he may be restored upon the recommendation of the Elders and the vote of the church.

ARTICLE III: MEETINGS

Section 1. Meetings for Worship and Edification

Meetings for public worship and instruction shall be held as often as the Elders may determine, but shall always include a morning service on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Supper shall be administered at the discretion of the Elders, but normally on the first Lord's Day of each month during the morning service. Other meetings and ministries shall be scheduled according to the needs of the congregation and in accordance with God's Word, such as mid-week prayer meetings, small group studies, biblical and theological classes, conferences, seminars, and outreach ministries.

Section 2. Business Meetings

A. Regular Business Meetings

1. The Annual Meeting

The primary business meeting of the church shall take place in October of each year, and shall be called "The Annual Meeting." At the Annual Meeting, at least the following items of business shall be transacted:

- a. The approval of an annual church budget; *and*
- b. A report on the church membership, giving an account of the regular and associate members and those whose membership has been terminated.

2. Quarterly Business Meetings

The church shall hold quarterly business meetings in January, April, and July of each year for the reception of reports and the transaction of business not reserved for the Annual Meeting. The presentation of a financial report for the previous year will be given at the January regular business meeting.

B. Special Business Meetings

It may be necessary from time to time to hold business meetings for the transaction of business that cannot be postponed until a regular business meeting. Such meetings may be called under the following circumstances:

1. In non-emergency cases, the Elders may call a special business meeting and shall announce the meeting and its purpose at a regular Sunday morning service at least one week prior to the meeting. In the event there are no Elders, the Deacons may call such a business meeting in accordance with the same guidelines. In the event that the church has no officers, then any three male regular members may call such a meeting.

2. In cases of emergency, the Elders may call a special business meeting with less than a week's notice, though they are required to make a reasonable effort to contact all regular church members to inform them of the meeting. In the event there are no Elders, the Deacons may call such a business meeting in accordance with the same guidelines. In the event that the church has no officers, then any three male regular members may call such a meeting.

3. In special circumstances, one-fourth of the regular members may submit a written petition to require the Elders (or Deacons, if there are no Elders) to call a special business meeting. Such petition must state the purpose of the meeting.

C. Voting and Quorum

Any regular member in good standing shall have the right to vote at church business

meetings. All decisions shall be made by a simple majority of those present and voting unless specifically stated otherwise in this Constitution and By-Laws. At any business meeting, a quorum shall consist of no less than 25% of the regular membership or 10 regular members, whichever is greater.

ARTICLE IV: OFFICERS

Section 1. General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of his church. However, he has ordained that the administration of local churches is to be accomplished by qualified men who are called by the Holy Spirit to minister in special offices. These offices are those of Elders or Pastors and Deacons. The Lord's appointment to these offices is recognized not only by the inward conviction of the individual called, but also by the approval of the church as it observes the possession of those gifts and scriptural qualifications required. All men occupying the offices of Elder and Deacon shall be regular members of this church, and shall conscientiously subscribe to the *Charleston Confession of Faith* (as amended in this constitution).

Section 2. Elders

A. Function

1. The Elders shall have under their direction the welfare and oversight of the church, serving as guardians and shepherds of the flock over which God has made them overseers (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9). Their oversight of the church involves administering and supervising the programs and ministries of the church, tending to the pastoral care and spiritual growth of each member of the congregation, devotion to prayer, and the regular and systematic preaching and teaching of the Word of God in the church's public meetings. In all matters, the Elders are to conduct themselves as servant-leaders, "not lording it over those entrusted to [them], but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3).

2. It is also the function of the Elders to oversee and (under normal circumstances) administer the ordinances of the church, to moderate at business meetings, and to supervise the work of the deacons and hired church staff (e.g., church secretary, janitor, etc.).

B. Plurality of Elders

1. It is the teaching of Scripture that the local church should have a plurality of Elders. Therefore, it shall be the practice of this church to establish and maintain, if at all possible, such a plurality of Elders. The Bible does not specify, however, the exact number of Elders a church should have, and thus the church should be guided by its recognition among the congregation of those qualified and called by the Holy Spirit.

2. All Elders are equal in spiritual authority and are alike responsible to God for the general oversight of the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from Elder to Elder, this diversity shall not undermine real parity among the Elders. Therefore, all decisions concerning the oversight of the church shall normally be made by the unanimous consent of the Elders. If, after much prayer and discussion, such unanimity cannot be found on a given issue, and a majority of the Elders are in agreement (or one Elder in the event that there are only two), the matter may be brought before the congregation for resolution. In such cases, the church may decide on a course of action by a two-thirds majority vote of the regular members present and voting at a duly called business meeting.

3. The Elders shall normally meet weekly for carrying out their oversight responsibilities.

C. Qualifications

Anyone desiring the office of an Elder must evidence to the church the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3.

D. Financial Support of Elders

1. According to the Scriptures, Elders should be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts, the needs and capability of the church, and the direction of Christ her Head. This means that some Elders may receive little or no financial remuneration. Nevertheless, it shall be the goal of this church to fully support at least one Elder so that he may devote himself to the preaching and teaching of the Word and the pastoral oversight of the church, using as its criteria the recognition of special ability in ruling and excellence in preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17).

2. The Elders may recommend to the church that additional Elders be fully or partially supported according to these Elders' gifts, the extent of their ministries, and the capability of the church. Financial support of any Elder must be approved by a three-fourths majority of the regular members present and voting by ballot at a duly called business meeting.

E. Regular Preaching and Pastoral Ministry

1. In the event that the church has no Elder who is capable of or willing to fulfill a regular preaching and pastoral ministry, the church shall establish a Pastoral Search Committee. The Pastoral Search Committee shall have five members consisting of the Elders of the church and, if needed to bring the number up to five, other regular church members in good standing elected by the regular members present and voting by ballot at a duly called business meeting.

2. The determination as to whether an existing Elder is capable of fulfilling a regular preaching and pastoral ministry shall be made by the church by no fewer than a three-fourths majority of the regular members present and voting by ballot at a duly called business meeting. In making this determination, the church shall consider the Elder's willingness to fulfill this ministry, his fitness for this ministry, the extent of his training, and the church's ability to remunerate him according to his needs.

3. When the Pastoral Search Committee has found a suitable candidate for the regular preaching and pastoral ministry, and after the congregation has been given sufficient opportunity to become acquainted with his qualifications, the Pastoral Search Committee shall recommend to the church that he be admitted to the eldership and installed in the regular preaching and pastoral ministry of the church. The church may accept the recommendation by no less than a three-fourths majority of the regular members present and voting by ballot at a duly called business meeting.

4. If a candidate for the regular preaching and pastoral ministry has not been previously ordained, the Pastoral Search Committee, prior to recommending him to the church, shall establish a council of ordination in accordance with paragraph F.2.b below. This council shall consist of elders from other churches of like faith and order chosen by the Pastoral Search Committee. In the event of his recommendation to and election by the church, the candidate shall be ordained in accordance with paragraph F.2.d below.

F. Ordination of Elders

1. General Statement

Entrance into the pastoral ministry begins with a call from the Holy Spirit and culminates in

the ordination to the office of Elder through the laying on of hands by the eldership. The Lord's appointment of an individual to this office is recognized by the church by means of his possession of the gifts and qualifications required by Scripture.

2. *Procedure of Appointment*

The recognition of those whom the Lord has appointed to hold this office involves four steps: application, examination, election, and ordination.

a. *Application.* Because the eldership is an office to which a man is specially called by the Holy Spirit, a candidate for ordination must have a sense of divine calling to the office and a desire for ordination. Thus, the initiative in beginning the ordination process normally lies with the man who believes he is called. Though in some circumstances the church may ask a man to prayerfully consider the eldership, he must in any case make application to the Elders of the church, informing them of his desire and requesting candidacy to ordination. If there are no Elders to whom he can apply, he must await the church's fulfillment of the requirements of subsection E above.

b. *Examination.* When a man applies for ordination, the Elders shall begin an extensive process of examination, reviewing the candidate's qualifications for the office and guiding him, if necessary, through an appropriate process of study and training. When and if, after this initial process of review, a candidate appears qualified and prepared for the eldership, the Elders, with the assistance of other churches of like faith and order, shall conduct an oral examination of the candidate to test his biblical, theological, and practical knowledge. If the candidate passes this examination, the Elders shall recommend to the church that he be ordained to the eldership.

c. *Election.* At a duly called business meeting, and upon the recommendation of the Elders, the congregation shall discuss the qualifications of the candidate. After such discussion, the church will vote by ballot and may express its recognition of the candidate's call by no less than a three-fourths majority of the regular members present and voting.

d. *Ordination.* As soon as possible after a candidate's election, at a regular worship service, the Elder(s)-elect shall be ordained. One of the existing Elders shall question the Elder(s)-elect as follows:

(1) "Do you believe the Scriptures as written in the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and do you accept them as the inerrant and only infallible rule of faith and practice?"

(2) "Have you personally adopted and will you cheerfully submit to and defend the Confession of Faith, Constitution and By-Laws of this church?"

(3) "Do you accept the Office of Elder readily with full awareness of the solemn responsibility it entails, and do you promise to perform its duties of caring for the flock of God in the fear of his name?"

Then the hands of the existing Elders shall be placed on the head(s) of the Elder(s)-elect and prayer and exhortation offered in his behalf. Following this, the people shall be exhorted to esteem and obey those whom God has placed over them.

e. If a man who has been previously ordained as an Elder in a church of like faith and

order applies for entrance into the eldership, the requirements of paragraph 2.d. above shall not apply. He must nevertheless be examined in accordance with paragraph 2.b. above (except that the involvement of other churches need not be required), and elected by the church in accordance with paragraph 2.c above.

Section 3. Deacons

A. Function

1. Deacons are primarily responsible, under the direction of the Elders, for administering the secular, business and benevolent concerns of the church. They shall also assist the Elders in the performance of pastoral ministries by providing spiritual and physical comfort to the sick and distressed. Further, the deacons shall care for and maintain the properties of the church.

2. With regard to business affairs, the deacons shall have the following specific duties:

a. With the approval of the Elders, to appoint each year a *Finance Committee* comprised of at least one deacon and at least two other members of the church. The Church Treasurer (see below) shall be an *ex officio* member of the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee shall prepare a church budget for the next calendar year and submit it to the Elders for approval. When approved by the Elders, the proposed budget shall be distributed to the congregation at least one month before the Annual Meeting. Additionally, the Finance Committee shall establish policies and procedures for maintaining financial accountability, and shall ensure that an audit of the church's financial records is conducted by an independent accounting firm normally every year, but no less than every three years.

b. With the approval of the Elders, to appoint, either from their own number or from the congregation, a *Church Treasurer*. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to disburse funds in accordance with the church budget. The Treasurer shall also keep a record of all financial transactions and shall make a quarterly report at each Quarterly Business Meeting and an annual financial report at the Annual Meeting.

c. With the approval of the Elders, to appoint, either from their own number or from the congregation, a *Church Clerk*. It shall be the duties of the Clerk to keep the minutes of all church business meetings, to keep an accurate record of the church membership, and to maintain all official reports and correspondences of the congregation.

d. With the approval of the Elders, to appoint, either from their own number or from the congregation, a *Financial Secretary*. It shall be the duties of the Financial Secretary to collect and deposit all financial receipts, and to keep a record of each church member's contributions to the church.

e. With the approval of the Elders, to recommend to the church as needed hired staff persons (e.g., church secretary, janitor, etc.) in accordance with budgetary allowances. Such hired staff may be dismissed by the deacons with the approval of the Elders.

3. The Deacons shall meet as often as necessary for carrying out their responsibilities, but no less than once a month.

B. Qualifications

Anyone elected to the office of a Deacon must evidence to the church the personal, domestic,

and ministerial qualifications set forth in Acts 6:1-7 and 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

C. Lack of Deacons

In the event that the church has no Deacons, the Elders shall insure that the responsibilities of the diaconate are met.

D. Ordination of Deacons

1. General Statement

Entrance into the diaconate begins with the nomination of a qualified man and culminates in the ordination to the office of Deacon through the laying on of hands by the eldership. The Lord's appointment of an individual to this office is recognized by the church by means of his possession of the gifts and qualifications required by Scripture.

2. Procedure of Appointment

The recognition of those qualified to hold this office involves four steps: nomination, examination, election, and ordination.

a. *Nomination.* If the Elders believe that the church needs additional Deacons, a nominating ballot shall be taken at a Regular Business Meeting. On this ballot, each voting member may write the names of any male members that he believes are qualified for the diaconate up to the number recommended by the Elders. To be nominated, a man must be named on no less than 20% of the ballots cast.

b. *Examination.* The Elders shall examine those men nominated for the diaconate, reviewing each candidate's qualifications for the office and guiding him, if necessary, through an appropriate process of study and training. When and if, after this initial process of review, a candidate appears qualified and prepared for the diaconate, the Elders shall recommend to the church that he be ordained to the diaconate.

c. *Election.* At a duly called business meeting, and upon the recommendation of the Elders, the congregation shall discuss the qualifications of the candidate. After such discussion, the church will vote by ballot and may express its recognition of the candidate's call by no less than a three-fourths majority of the regular members present and voting.

d. *Ordination.* As soon as possible after a candidate's election, at a regular worship service, the Deacon(s)-elect shall be ordained. One of the Elders shall question the Deacon(s)-elect as follows:

(1) "Do you believe the Scriptures as written in the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and do you accept them as the inerrant and only infallible rule of faith and practice?"

(2) "Have you personally adopted and will you cheerfully submit to and defend the Confession of Faith, Constitution and By-Laws of this church?"

(3) "Do you accept the Office of Deacon readily with full awareness of the solemn responsibility it entails, and do you promise to care for the poor and needy and to manage the business affairs of this church in the fear of God?"

Then the hands of the Elders and existing Deacons shall be placed on the head(s) of the Deacon(s)-elect and prayer and exhortation offered in his behalf. Following this, the people

shall be exhorted to esteem those whom God has appointed to serve them.

e. If a man who has been previously ordained as a Deacon in a church of like faith and order applies for entrance into the diaconate, the requirements of paragraph 2.d. above shall not apply. He must nevertheless be examined in accordance with paragraph 2.b. above and elected by the church in accordance with paragraph 2.c above.

Section 4. Review and Removal of Officers

Once appointed and ordained, each Elder and Deacon shall be understood to hold his office in the church for life unless he resigns for good cause or is dismissed by the church due to his no longer meeting the qualifications for his office. Nevertheless, to insure that church officers remain qualified, the following provisions are made.

A. The church shall re-evaluate the qualifications of each officer every three years. After such re-evaluation, the church may reaffirm its call of each officer by a vote of the regular members present and voting by ballot at a Regular Business Meeting. One month prior to the vote, the Elders shall instruct the congregation in the biblical qualifications for officers and the biblical procedures for addressing concerns.

B. Any two members with reason to believe that an officer is no longer qualified for his office, shall express their concerns to the Elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action should be done in accordance with the instruction of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

C. Any vote to dismiss an Elder or Deacon must be taken by ballot at a duly called business meeting. The church may remove an Elder or Deacon from office by a vote of the regular members present and voting and with the unanimous consent of the Elders (not including an Elder being considered for removal), or, without the unanimous consent of the Elders, by a two-thirds majority of the regular members present and voting.

ARTICLE V: TRUSTEES

In order to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” this church shall have an official Board of Trustees, which shall represent the church in legal matters. This Board shall consist of at least three regular church members (who are not Elders) elected from the church at large. Members of the Board of Trustees shall be elected every three years at the Annual Business Meeting or as required to fill vacancies on the Board. The Board shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing each action.

ARTICLE VI: COMMITTEES

Section 1: Establishment of Committees

The church will establish and maintain all the committees necessary to assist the Church in fulfilling its mission and developing its ministry. Committees will be organized as the need arises. The congregation, the Deacons, or the Elders may recognize the need and make recommendation to the Elders to establish a committee. Members of all committees are to be appointed by the Deacons with the approval of the Elders. The Deacons will appoint new members to fill vacancies when they occur. Each committee will meet as often as necessary to fulfill its responsibilities. The chairman will determine the time of each meeting and it will be

his responsibility to notify each member of the time and place of every meeting. Committees will be either standing committees or temporary committees. The Elders, the Deacons, the Trustees, and any councils are not considered committees.

Section 2: Standing Committees

A standing committee is one whose area of responsibility is continuous. (Example: Finance Committee.) All standing committees shall have a minimum of three members. No member of a standing committee will serve longer than five (5) successive years and must remain off that committee for a period of one (1) year prior to re-appointment. The Deacons shall structure the appointment of members to standing committees in such a way that not all members end their terms in the same year.

Section 3: Temporary Committees

A temporary committee is one whose area of responsibility is for a specific, limited in time, need. When the responsibility of the temporary committee has been fulfilled, it is automatically dissolved. The number of members on a temporary committee will be determined by the Elders. Should a vacancy arise on a temporary committee, the Elders may or may not appoint a new member at its own discretion. The provisions of this section do not apply to the Pastoral Search Committee described in Article IV.2.E.

ARTICLE VII: DISSOLUTION

If Grace Covenant Baptist Church should ever be dissolved, all of its assets remaining after payment and satisfaction of all of its costs, and indebtedness, including the expenses of such dissolution, shall be distributed to non-profit corporations affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention which are qualified for exemption under Section 501 C (3) of the Internal Revenue Code or any successor to said section.

The members of Grace Covenant Baptist Church, as defined in Article I of its By-Laws, who are members in good standing at the time of dissolution of said corporation shall in a duly called business meeting, designate the non-profit corporation(s) or organization(s) affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention to receive assets of the corporation upon dissolution. No assets of Grace Covenant Baptist Church shall be distributed to any member or officer or trustee of this church.