

Constitution & By-Laws

Grace Baptist Church of Flower Mound, Texas

Last Amended NOVEMBER 27, 2022

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CONSTITUTION

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*All Scripture and References are taken from the
Authorized Version commonly called the King James Version.*

PREAMBLE

Endeavoring to serve faithfully the Lord Jesus Christ by teaching and propagating at home and abroad the entire Bible as the verbally and plerarily inspired and inerrant Word of God and contending for the "*faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3) and being admonished by the Word of God to "*let all things be done decently and in order*" (I Corinthians 14:40), and that we may more readily help each other in our Christian service, we willingly and cheerfully declare and establish this **Constitution** with its **Covenant, Statement of Faith, and By-Laws** to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I NAME, PURPOSE, AND AUTONOMY

SECTION 1 – NAME

This independent Baptist congregation of baptized believers shall be known as the **Grace Baptist Church of Flower Mound, Texas.**

SECTION 2 – PURPOSE

(A) This congregation is organized as a Church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes, within the meaning of Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1906, including, but not limited to, such purposes as the establishing and maintaining of Biblical worship; the building, maintaining, and operating of Churches, parsonages, schools, chapels, radio stations, television stations, rescue missions, print shops, day care centers, nursing homes, cemeteries, and any other ministries that the Church may be led of God to establish.

(B) This Church will ordain individual members of Grace Baptist Church who meet Biblical qualifications for the ministry; evangelize the unsaved by the proclaiming of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; educate believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture, *daily in the temple and from house to house*; maintain missionary activities in the United States and any foreign country; and engage in any other ministry that the Church may decide, from time to time, to pursue in obedience to the will of God.

SECTION 3 - AUTONOMY

This congregation shall be, and remain, independent and autonomous with no outside authority dictating policy or affiliation. The governing of this Church shall be vested solely in its assembled membership, through its duly elected officers (Pastor[s] and Deacons). However, it may participate, subject to the consent of its membership, in fellowship and activity with organizations of like doctrine for the promotion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as long as it does not infringe upon the independence of autonomy of this Church.

ARTICLE II COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of our Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, 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 engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, 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 give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; 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 also engage to maintain family and private devotions, to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred, acquaintances and all others; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful to our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; and to be zealous in our efforts to evangelize the lost.

We further engage 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 empathy; to exercise courtesy of speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure reconciliation without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will 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.

Following is the Membership Covenant document that we ask all prospective new members to affirm:

Membership Covenant

I affirm my faith in Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and have identified with Him through believer's baptism. I agree with the Grace Baptist Church Statement of Faith, and commit myself to this body of believers to fulfill the New Testament work of the local church, including the following:

Love God

I will participate in the weekly worship services and respond to the preaching of God's Word as His Spirit leads. I will observe the Lord's Table together with my church family. (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34)

I will honor the Lord with systematic financial support of His work through regular tithes and offerings. (Malachi 3:10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7-8)

I will walk faithfully with Christ through Bible study and prayer, and will seek to live in a manner consistent with His Word. (2 Timothy 2:15, 20-22)

Love Others

I will relate to my fellow members in love, avoiding gossip, anger and resentment. I will exercise the grace, kindness and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. (Colossians 3:12-16)

I will participate in opportunities for spiritual growth as the Lord leads and as my schedule allows, such as adult Bible fellowships, revival services and conferences. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

I will love and nurture the members of my immediate family according to the teachings of God's Word. I will teach my family the Word, applying its truths to our lives. (Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

Serve Both

I will find a place to serve in the body where I may exercise my spiritual gifts to advance Christ's work. (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Peter 4:10)

I will cultivate a servant's heart toward my fellow members, praying for and supporting those who suffer. (1 Corinthians 12:25-27; Galatians 6:2)

I will share the Gospel with those in my family and community. I will reach out with the love of Christ to my friends and neighbors. I will support and pray for the missionaries our church is helping to send around the world. (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

I have read the Grace Baptist Church Constitution. I commit, if God leads me from this place, to unite as soon as possible with some other Baptist church where I can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ARTICLE III STATEMENT OF FAITH

SECTION 1 – STATEMENT OF FAITH

(A) The Bible

We believe in the plenary, verbal, Divine inspiration of the sixty-six canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments (from Genesis to Revelation) in the original languages, and in their consequent infallibility and inerrancy of all matters of which they speak (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments are the complete and divine revelation of God to man. The books known as the Apocrypha, however, are not the inspired Word of God in any sense whatsoever. As the Bible uses it, the term “inspiration” refers to the writings, not the writers (2 Timothy 3:16-17); the writers are spoken of as being “holy men of God” who were “moved,” “carried,” or “borne” along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21) in such a definite way that their writings were supernaturally, plenary, and verbally inspired, free from any error, infallible, and inerrant, as no other writings have ever been or ever will be inspired.

We believe that the Texts which are the closest to the original autographs of the Bible are the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text for the Old Testament, and the Traditional Received Greek Text for the New Testament underlying the King James Version (as found in “The Greek Text Underlying The English Authorized Version of 1611” as published by THE TRINITARIAN BIBLE SOCIETY in 1976). The King James Version of the Bible shall be the official and only translation used by the church for preaching and teaching.

We believe that the King James Version (or Authorized Version) of the English Bible is a true, faithful, and accurate translation of these two providentially preserved Texts, which in our time has no equal among all of the other English Translations. The translators did such a fine job in their translation task that we can without apology hold up the Authorized Version of 1611 and say “This is the WORD OF GOD!” while at the same time realizing that, in some verses, we must go back to the underlying original language Texts for complete clarity, and also compare Scripture with Scripture.

We believe that all the verses in the King James Version belong in the Old and the New Testaments because they represent words we believe were in the original Texts, although there might be other renderings from the original languages which could also be acceptable to us today. For an exhaustive study of any of the words or verses in the Bible, we urge the student to return directly to the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text and the Traditional Received Greek Text rather than to any other translation for help.

The following is an explanation of our statement of faith regarding the Bible.

(1) The Importance of Both Inspiration and Preservation. Bible inspiration and Bible preservation are supremely important. The undermining or destroying of either doctrine renders the other meaningless. If the Bible is not verbally, plenary, and inerrantly inspired, and if inspiration does not extend to all matters of which the Bible speaks, it does not matter if the Bible has been preserved or how it has been preserved. It also follows that, if the Bible has not been preserved, it does not matter how it was inspired.

- (2) The Original Process of Inspiration.** Inspiration deals with God's revelation of truth which man did not know and which man could not know apart from divine revelation. God used men whom He chose and prepared in order to write these words upon the original manuscripts. Since God made no mistakes in inspiration, these original manuscripts were inerrant. The very words were written down exactly as God intended. These manuscripts were ultimately collected and formed into a canon and then preserved for the benefit of later generations. This entire process from the writing of the manuscripts to their ultimate preservation was not accidental, nor did it happen by chance; rather, the entire process was superintended by God the Holy Spirit.
- (3) The Results of Inspiration Extended to Exact Copies of the Originals.** The results of inspiration, however, cannot be limited to the original manuscripts, but must be extended to include exact copies which were made of the originals. This is evident because it was the words which were inspired rather than the ink, the writing materials, the handwriting, or even the writers. It was these words which were infallibly "breathed out" by God the Holy Spirit through His human writers. These words were in Hebrew/Aramaic in the Old Testament, and in Greek in the New Testament. This process of inspiration will never again be repeated because the canon has been closed. However, the product of inspiration, which is the exact words which God the Holy Spirit breathed out in the original languages, remains, even though the original manuscripts are no longer in existence. Any exact copy of the words of the original manuscripts is as much the inspired and inerrant Word of God as were the original manuscripts.
- (4) God Promised to Preserve His Word.** This should not be surprising because God has promised to preserve His Word. The Bible says, "Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou has founded them forever" (Psalm 119:152). It also says, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever (Psalm 12:6-7). It also says, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven: (Psalm 119:89), and the Word of God is described as that which "liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). Peter also wrote, ". . . The word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Peter 1:25). Christ also said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).
- (5) God's Word is Preserved in Accurate Translations of the Original Language Texts.** God has preserved these Scriptures not only in the original languages, but also in accurate translations made of them. Must one learn Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic to be able to read God's truth? Did God intend that the whole world be taught Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic before the gospel could be preached to them? Must pastors be Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic scholars in order that they may teach people the holy Word of God? Certainly not. On the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2:5-11, "there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven" (verse 5). As the Apostles spoke, they were all amazed and asked, "How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" This supernatural witness of the church at Jerusalem showed the Word of God going out to all the nations of the world in their own individual languages. God's Word went out with equal authority in all those languages to all those nations on the day of Pentecost.
- (6) God Intended That His Word be Translated Accurately in All Languages.** Without question, God intended that His Word be translated accurately into all languages to

fulfill the Great Commission to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). This is further substantiated by Paul's version of the Great Commission to the Gentiles which is found in Romans 16:25-26, "But now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." First comes the preaching of the gospel to the peoples of all the nations in verse 25, and then comes the circulation of the Scriptures in their own languages in verse 26. God is commanding that the Scriptures must be made known to all nations for their obedience to the faith.

(7) An Accurate Translation of the Proper Original Language Texts Can Be Called the "Word of God." Can an accurate translation of the Bible be called the true "WORD OF GOD"? Yes it can. God's truth is in no way confined to the original language texts of Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic and available only to those who understand these original languages. We believe God made it clear in His Word that He intended that all the nations of the world hear His true Word in their own languages.

(8) Accurate Translation Aims for a Complete Equivalence from the Original Language into the Second Language. The English word, "water," is known to the chemist as "H₂O." In Latin it is "aqua." In Hebrew it is "mayim." In Greek it is "hudor." Now when Jesus spoke to the woman at the well in John 4 and called Himself the Living "water," does this English word have less truth than "hudor" in the original Greek? Of course not. However, not every word in one language has an exact or complete equivalent in another language. Sometimes a single word in one language must be translated by several words in another language. Also, in order to clarify the meaning of the translation, translators must frequently add words which are implied but not actually present in the original text. The Authorized Version placed many of these added words in italics in order to distinguish them from the words which are actually found in the original text. In addition, the order of the words in each sentence in one language may differ from the order of the words in the same sentence in another language. However, to the extent that a translation provides the actual or complete equivalence in another language of the word counterparts of the original Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic, it is an accurate translation of the true, inerrant, infallible Word of God, and therefore is the true Word of God in that language.

(9) The Biblical Use of the Word "Inspiration." Notwithstanding the many extraneous and non-Biblical definitions of the word "inspiration," this word is found only once in the New Testament. Much insight is given to this term by studying the context where it was used:

- And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

The Scriptures spoken of here were the Old Testament Scriptures studied as a child. These Scriptures had been copied many times from the original Hebrew. After centuries of providential preservation, they were still called the "Holy Scriptures." They were originally inspired to have a lasting effect in doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. They were also originally inspired in order that every man of God "may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

(10) The Providential Preservation of the Original Language Texts Has Been Held Throughout Church History. The following doctrinal statement testifying to various historical churches' belief in the providential preservation of the original language texts of Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek is found virtually word for word in the following Historic Confessions: (1) The London Baptist Confession of 1677 and 1689; (2) the Philadelphia Baptist Confession of about 1743; (3) the Westminster Confession of 1646; (4) and the Savoy Confession of 1652. The wording from the LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION of 1689 is:

- *The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek, (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, AND BY HIS SINGULAR CARE AND PROVIDENCE KEPT PURE IN ALL AGES, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read and search them, therefore, they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.*

(Chapter I, "OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES" "8," pp. 9-10 of "Things Most Surely Believed Among Us – The BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH OF 1689;" Evangelical Press, 136 Rosendale Road, London, S.E. 21.)

(11) The Superiority of the Authorized Version Even Today. The Authorized Version has been, and continues to be, the God-honored, most accurate, and best translation from the proper original language texts of the inspired, inerrant, infallible, and authoritative Word of God for the English-speaking nations. Spurgeon said of it, "We are all fully assured that our own English version (meaning the A.V. of 1611) of the Scriptures is sufficient for plain men for all purposes of life, salvation, and godliness." Because of changes in spelling and meaning of English words over the centuries, the Authorized Version has had a number of word alterations since 1611 to keep accurate in English communication. These changes were not the fault of the translators of the Authorized Version, but the result of changes in the English language.

(B) The Godhead

We believe in one Triune God, perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom, and measureless in power, eternally co-existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We also believe that each is co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and has the same attributes and perfection, each executing distinct but harmonious offices in the work of redemption (*Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 3:16, 17; 28:19; John 14:10, 26; II Corinthians 13:14; I John 5:7*).

(1) God the Father

We believe that God the Father is the eternal first person of the Godhead. He demonstrates His Fatherhood in the infinite and eternal relationship He sustains to Jesus Christ, His eternal Son. He also demonstrates such relationship to the repentant, believing sinner through the merit of the atoning death of Christ. This Fatherhood of God cannot be known except as revealed in the Sonship of Christ. The Fatherhood cannot be possessed or experienced by man, except through the mediation of Jesus Christ. As God the Father, He maintains a continuous, personal relation with His children. As He is the Author, He is also the Sustainer, the

Sustenance of all living creatures (*I Kings 19:5-7; Psalm 104:27-30; Matthew 6:26; Matthew 10:29, 30; Matthew 11:27; Galatians 3:26; Hebrews 12:5-11; John 1:11-13*).

(2) God the Son

- (a)** We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the ~~eternal~~ Son of God and second eternal person of the Godhead. We also believe that He became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men (*Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Luke 1:35; John 1:1, 2, 14; II Corinthians 5:19-21; Galatians 4:4, 5; Philippians 2:5-8*).
- (b)** We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, Who lived a sinless life, accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice. We also believe that our justification is made sure by His literal bodily resurrection from the dead (*Acts 2:18-36; Romans 3:24, 25; Ephesians 1:7; I Peter 1:3-5; I Peter 2:24*).
- (c)** We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven, and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Intercessor and Advocate (*Acts 1:9, 10; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24; 7:25; I John 2:1, 2*).
- (d)** We believe in the imminent, bodily, personal return of Jesus Christ. We believe in the rapture of the Church, in which He shall come for His saints, both living and dead, appearing in the air only at that time, before the seven-year tribulation period. We believe in His personal, visible, return to the earth with His saints to judge the existing nations and to establish His earthly kingdom for 1000 years (*Matthew 25:31; Acts 1:11; I Corinthians 15:51, 52; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:13, 16; Revelation 19:15*).

(3) God the Holy Spirit

- (a)** We believe that the Holy Spirit is the eternal third person of the Godhead Who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. We also believe that He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them unto the day of redemption (*John 16:8-11; Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 12:12-14; II Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13, 14*).
- (b)** We believe that the Holy Spirit, as the Chief Agent of inspiration, illumination, and revelation, is the Divine Teacher. As such, He assists believers to understand and appropriate the Scriptures and that it is the privilege and duty of the saved to be filled with the Spirit (*Ephesians 1:17, 18; 5:18; I John 2:20, 27*).
- (c)** We believe that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowal of spiritual ministry gifts to every believer. God uniquely uses evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip believers in the assembly, in order that they can do the work of the ministry (*Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:4-11, 28; Ephesians 4:7-12*).
- (d)** We believe that the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and the gift of healing, were temporary. Speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit. Ultimate deliverance of the body from sickness or death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection, though God frequently chooses to answer the prayers of believers for physical healing (*I Corinthians 1:22; 13:8-10; 14:21-22*).

(C) Man

We believe that man was created a free moral agent in the image and likeness of God, by a direct act of God, but that in Adam's sin, the human race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God. We also believe that man is totally depraved, and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition or please God in any way apart from faith in Jesus Christ on the basis of His shed blood (*Genesis 1:26, 27; Romans 3:22, 23; 5:12; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-19; Hebrews 11:6*).

(D) Dispensationalism

We believe that the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations in which God defined man's responsibilities in successive ages. These dispensations are not ways of salvation, but rather are divinely ordered stewardships by which God directs man according to His purpose. Key among these dispensations, three—the age of law, the age of the Church, and the age of the kingdom—are the subjects of detailed revelation in Scripture (*Genesis 1:28; I Corinthians 9: 17; II Corinthians 3:9-18; Galatians 3:13-25; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2-10; Colossians 1:24, 25, 27; Revelation 20:2-6*).

(E) Salvation and Eternal Security of Believers

We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith, without works, in the Lord Jesus Christ. His precious blood was shed on the cross as the only payment for our sins (*John 1:12; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9-13; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-7; I Peter 1:18, 19*).

- (1) We believe that once saved all the redeemed are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (*John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1, 38, 39; I Corinthians 1:4-8; I Peter 1:4-5*).
- (2) We believe that it is the privilege and responsibility of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word (*Romans 13:13, 14; Titus 2:11-15*).

(F) Baptism

(1) We believe the Scriptures teach that it is God's will and command for every believer to follow Christ in baptism as soon as is reasonable after being saved (*Acts 16:30; Acts 2:41*). Believing (salvation) is the only scriptural requirement for baptism. We believe there are four scriptural requirements that constitute a valid baptism:

- (a) **Scriptural baptism requires the proper candidate.** According to Scripture, baptism is always only for believers. By this we mean those who have placed their faith and trust in Christ alone for salvation, recognizing their sinful condition before a holy and just God, and through repentance and faith have received Christ Jesus as their one and only Savior. The clearest example of an individual's baptism in the Bible is the Ethiopian eunuch in *Acts 8:36-39*. In verse 36, the eunuch asked, "...what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip answered with the condition of baptism in vs. 37, "... if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The eunuch's response demonstrated his understanding of salvation as prerequisite to baptism, "... I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." *Never in the pages of the Word of God is anyone baptized prior to salvation, never is an infant baptized, never is anyone coerced into being baptized, nor is anyone born-again by their baptism.*
- (b) **Scriptural baptism requires the proper mode.** When we speak of the mode of baptism, we refer to the method of baptism. We believe the

scriptures only authorize, by precept and pattern, baptism by immersion. “Sprinkling” and “pouring” are not scriptural modes of baptism and therefore we reject them. In the New Testament we have two examples of people going down into the water to be baptized. First, in Acts 8:38-39, both Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch went down into the water and came up out of the water. Second, in Matthew 3:16, Jesus Christ Himself was baptized in the same manner. Baptism is a *demonstration* of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When a person dies, their burial is the complete immersion of their body in the ground. Dirt is not sprinkled on the body and called buried. The Biblical mode or method of baptism is complete immersion in water. No one in the Bible was ever sprinkled. Sprinkling has nothing to do with and cannot in any way represent or picture the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- (c) **Scriptural baptism requires the proper purpose.** We believe the Bible teaches that baptism is a symbol not a sacrament. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision. Baptism plays no part in our salvation. It is only a picture of our salvation. It is a public profession of our faith in Christ alone as our Savior. Any baptism administered with the idea that it is a part of the salvation process is known as “baptismal regeneration” and we reject it as being invalid according to the Scriptures.
- (d) **Scriptural baptism requires the proper administration.**
- The responsibility of administering baptism was given to the local church by our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - It is an ordinance. An ordinance is something that was ordered by the Lord to be commemorated in the local church.
 - There are two scriptural ordinances: baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
 - Ordinances are pictures or object lessons that teach doctrine. Our administration of these ordinances teaches either right doctrine or false doctrine.
 - The ordinances are local church ordinances; that is, they are given to the local church, not an individual person, and as such are to be administered by the pastor of the local church as overseer of the church or by one under his direction.
 - Paul had the authority to baptize because he was an Apostle (we are not apostles). Paul also had authority to baptize because he had been sent out from the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3) and baptized under the church’s authority. This is the way we do missions still today. A missionary is sent out of a local church and baptizes by the sending church’s authority when the new church is ready to be self-sustaining, a pastor is ordained, and he then administers the ordinances in that church.
 - *We believe, therefore, that only a legitimate local church of the Lord Jesus Christ is authorized by Him to administer the ordinance of baptism. A church that teaches false doctrine about salvation and eternal security cannot be a true church of Jesus Christ and therefore we reject baptisms from such churches to be unscriptural in both purpose and administration.*
- (e) **Furthermore, in baptism we identify with Jesus Christ, a body of doctrine, and a local church.** Acts 2:41-42 “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

- The door to salvation is Jesus Christ and the door to church membership is baptism. Doors have a two-fold purpose. They let some people in and they keep some people out. Following the scriptural requirements of baptism protects the purity of the church.
- If a person is saved and then baptized in a church that does not believe in the eternal security of the believer, that person has identified through their baptism with “conditional salvation.” To become a member of a Baptist church that person must identify, through scriptural baptism, with the proper biblical teaching of eternal security. Likewise, if a person has been genuinely born-again and is then baptized in a church that teaches “baptismal regeneration” (the teaching that one must be baptized in order to be saved), that person has identified through their baptism with a false gospel and would need to identify, through baptism, with the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone.
- *Baptists have been called “re-baptizers” for centuries because of their faithfulness in this area of biblical doctrine. However, Baptists are not “re-baptizing” because the so-called former “baptism” was really not a baptism in the biblical sense either not the proper mode (sprinkling or pouring), not the proper candidate (baby or non-believer), not the proper purpose (sacrament not symbol; baptismal regeneration) or not administered by an authorized church of Jesus Christ (espoused false doctrine).*

(2) Immediate baptism versus probation baptism.

- (a)** Bible words associated with baptism are “immediately” “straightway” and “same day”
- (b)** Baptism is the first step of obedience and obedience should never be “delayed obedience”
- (c)** There should be a thorough explanation of baptism to the new convert but that does not require a six week class
- (d)** Baptism is more about “identification” than “declaration”

(G) The Church

- (1)** We believe that the Church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is solely made up of born-again and baptized persons (*Ephesians 1:22, 23; 5:25-27*).
- (2)** We believe that the establishment and continuance of local Churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (*Acts 14:27; 20:17, 28-32; I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11*).
- (3)** We believe in the autonomy of the local Church being free of any external authority or control (*Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Romans 16:4; I Corinthians 3:9; 16:5:4-7, 13; I Peter 5:1-4*).
- (4)** We believe that water baptism (immersion) and the Lord’s Supper are the only Scriptural ordinances of obedience for the Church in this dispensation (*Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:41, 42; 18:8; I Corinthians 11:23-26*).
- (5)** We believe the scriptural order of things is salvation, then baptism, then church membership, then participation in the Lord’s Supper.
- (6)** All those who are in attendance at a worship service where the Lord’s Supper is being observed are welcomed to participate if, and only if, they are professing born again believers who have been baptized according to the Scriptures and are walking in fellowship with Christ and a member in good standing of a church of like faith and practice. This practice is known as “close” communion.

(H) Separation

We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Lord and Savior, and that separation from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices and associations is commanded of God. Christians are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. We also believe that Scripture clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh (*Romans 12:1, 2; 14:13; II Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 5:13; II Timothy 3:1-5; I John 2:15-17; II John 9-11*).

(I) The Second Advent of Christ

We believe in that "blessed hope," which is the personal, imminent return of Christ Who will rapture His Church prior to the seven-year tribulation period. At the end of the Tribulation, Christ will personally and visibly return, with His saints, to establish His earthly Messianic Kingdom which was promised to the Nation of Israel (*Psalms 89:34; Daniel 2:31-45; Zechariah 14:4-11; I Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; Revelation 3:10; 19:11-16; 20:1-6*).

(J) The Future State of Mankind

- (1)** We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (*Matthew 25:46; John 5:28, 29; 11:25, 26; I Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20:5, 6, 12-16*).
- (2)** We believe that the souls of the redeemed are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord. In conscious blessedness they await the rapture, when spirit, soul, and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord (*Luke 23:43; II Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 3:21; I Thessalonians 4:16, 17; Revelation 20:4-6*).
- (3)** We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in hell under conscious punishment and torment until, with soul and resurrected body reunited, they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment. They shall be cast into the Lake of Fire to suffer everlasting conscious punishment and torment (*Matthew 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-26; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Revelation 20:11-15*).

(K) Angels

- (1)** We believe that the existence of angels is clearly taught in both the Old and New Testaments. We also believe that God created an innumerable host of spirit, glorious, personal beings with various ranks and orders (*II Samuel 14:20; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 148:2, 5; Colossians 1:6, 16; Ephesians 1:21; 6:12; I Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 1:13, 14; Revelation 12:12; 22:8, 9*).
- (2)** We believe, according to the Scriptures, that the angel Lucifer was created perfect, a person of great beauty and brightness, and exalted in positional honor. As a result of pride in his own superiority, he sought to direct to himself worship due to God alone. We also believe that in consequence of his sin, he was degraded in person, position, and power, becoming Satan, or the Devil, the opponent of God and the enemy of man. He is the author of sin, the great tempter of man, and the accuser of the brethren. In God's final judgment, Satan shall suffer final defeat at the hands of God's own Son and be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire (*Job 1:6, 7; Isaiah 14:12-17; Matthew 4:2-11; 25:41; Revelation 20:10*).

(L) Creation

We accept and believe the Genesis account that God created the universe in six literal 24-hour periods. We also believe that man was created instantaneously and directly by

God and not by any means of evolution. (*Genesis 1, 2; Exodus 20:11; Colossians 1:16, 17*).

(M) Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is both an act and a process by which believers are set apart unto God and made partakers of His holiness. We also believe that it is positional, practical, and instantaneous in that it is begun in regeneration. It is progressive in that it is carried on in believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, as the believer uses the appointed means of self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, prayer, and especially the Word of God (*Proverbs 4:18; I Corinthians 1:2, 3:1-3; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 1:6; I Thessalonians 4:3; 5:23; I Peter 1:15, 16*).

(N) Authority

We believe that our eternal God is Sovereign over all of His Creation. We believe that God has established, for the welfare of mankind, three governing institutions: the family, human government, and the local New Testament Church. We believe that God has ordained each institution with delegated authority to perform specific responsibilities as set forth in the Holy Bible, the written Word of God. These institutions are to complement each other so that no institution has the power to infringe upon the responsibilities of the other. We believe that all individuals serving as agents of these institutions are ultimately accountable to God as His ministers for good. We believe that every soul is to be subject unto these governing powers, recognizing the divine origin of their authority. Each soul should be obedient to every ordinance of man for conscience sake, except in such cases where abuse of these delegated powers violates or seeks to make void the Word of God (*Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:22-24; Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 2:13-17*).

(O) Missions

We believe that God has given the local New Testament Church a Great Commission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. As ambassadors of Christ we must use all available Scriptural means to evangelize the lost, both in Jerusalem (home), Judea (state), Samaria (nation), and the uttermost part of the earth (world) (*Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 5:20*).

(P) Giving

(1) Recognizing that everything belongs to God, we believe that every Christian is a steward of God's wealth entrusted to him, and is obligated to support his local Church financially. Whereas the tithe belongs to God, we believe that the tithe is to be administered exclusively by the Church (*Genesis 14:20; Proverbs 3:9, 10; Malachi 3:7-12; John 3:17; Acts 4:34-37; I Corinthians 16:2; II Corinthians 9:6, 7; Galatians 6:6; Ephesians 4:28; I Timothy 5:17, 18*).

(2) Although we believe that God has established the tithe as the basis for giving, we further believe that Scripture encourages every Christian to give other offerings sacrificially and cheerfully to the support of the Church, the relief of those in need, and the spread of the Gospel. We believe that a Christian relinquishes all rights to direct the use of his tithe or offering once the gift has been made. (*Genesis 14:20; Proverbs 3:9, 10; Malachi 3:7-12; Acts 4:34-37; I Corinthians 16:2; II Corinthians 9:6, 7; Galatians 6:6; Ephesians 4:28; I Timothy 5:17, 18; John 3:17*).

(Q) Marriage and Human Sexuality

(1) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and one woman. We believe that any form

of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, transsexuality, transvestism, pedophilia, polygamy, bigamy, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance (*Genesis 2:24; Genesis 19:5, 13; Genesis 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; I Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; I Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4*).

- (2) We believe that the term "marriage" has only one legitimate meaning, and that is marriage, sanctioned by God, which joins one man and one woman in a single, covenantal union, as delineated by Scripture. Marriage ceremonies performed in any facility owned, leased, or rented by this church will be only those ceremonies sanctioned by God, joining one man with one woman as their gender was determined at birth. Whenever there is a conflict between the church's position and any new legal standard for marriage, the church's statement of faith, doctrines, and biblical positions will govern (*Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:24; Proverbs 18:22 and 19:14; Malachi 2:14; Mark 10:6-9; Romans 7:2; I Corinthians 7:1a; Ephesians 5:22-23*).

(R) Family Relationships

- (1) We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in positions before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders (pastors and deacons) of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church (*Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:18; I Timothy 2:8-15; 4:4-5, 12*).
- (2) We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. The wife is to submit herself to the Scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ. Children are an heritage from the Lord. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including Scriptural corporal correction (*Genesis 1:26-28; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalms 127:3-5; Proverbs 19:18, 22:15; 23:13-14; Mark 10:6-12; I Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; Hebrews 13:4; I Peter 3:1-7*).

(S) Abortion

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortion of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the physical or mental well-being of the mother are acceptable (*Job 3:16; Psalms 51:5; 139:14-16; Isaiah 44:24; 49:1,5; Jeremiah 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44*).

(T) Love

We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward both those who are not believers, those who oppose us, and those who engage in sinful actions. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat or the use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such sinful actions (*Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:44-*

48; Luke 6:31; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:9-10; 13:8-10; 17-21; Philippians 2:2-4; II Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; I John 3:17-18).

(U) Lawsuits Between Believers

We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil law suits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander (*I Corinthians 6:1-8; Ephesians 4:31-32*).

(V) Divorce and Remarriage

We believe that God disapproves of and forbids divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Divorce and remarriage is regarded as adultery except on the grounds of fornication. Although divorced and remarried persons or divorced persons may hold positions of service in the church and be greatly used of God for Christian service, they may not be considered for the offices of pastor or deacon (*Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3; I Corinthians 7:10-11, 39; I Timothy 3:2;12; Titus 1:6*).

(W) Euthanasia

We believe that the direct taking of an innocent human life is a moral evil, regardless of the intention. Life is a gift from God and must be respected from conception until natural death. Thus we believe that an act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder contrary to the will of God. Discontinuing medical procedures that are extraordinary or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be a legitimate refusal of over-zealous treatment (*Exodus 20:13, 23:7; Matthew 5:21; Acts 17:28*).

(X) Protection of Children

We believe that children are a heritage from the Lord and must be absolutely protected within the church from any form of abuse or molestation. The church has zero tolerance for any person, whether paid staff, volunteer, member, or visitor, who abuses or molests a child (*Psalms 127:3-5; Matthew 18:6; Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14*).

(Y) Priesthood of the Believer

We believe that every believer is a priest of God and may enter into His presence in prayer directly through our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. No other mediator is needed between God and His people (*I Timothy 2:5; I Peter 2:9; Hebrews 4:14-16*).

(Z) Individual Soul Liberty

We believe that every person, whether saved or unsaved, has the liberty to choose what he believes about God. Baptists have always been opposed to religious persecution. This liberty, however, does not exempt one from responsibility to the Word of God or from accountability to God Himself. (*Romans 14:5, 12; II Corinthians 4:2; Titus 1:9*).

SECTION 2 – EXTENT OF THIS STATEMENT OF FAITH

This **Statement of Faith** does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing **Statement of Faith** accurately represents the teaching of the Bible, and therefore, is binding upon all members.

ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1 – QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Upon a majority vote of the members present at any Church service or meeting, membership shall be extended to all who have had, and whose lives evidence, a genuine experience of regeneration through faith in, and acceptance of, the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior; been scripturally baptized in a Baptist church (or church of like faith and practice) who endeavor to live a consecrated life wholly unto the Lord, who fully subscribe to the Statement of faith; who enter into the church covenant contained herein; who agree to submit to the authority of the church and its leaders as set forth herein and upon compliance with any one of the following conditions:

- (A) By Profession of Faith and Scriptural Baptism (immersion) in a Baptist church (or church of like faith and practice)** as a true believer in Christ Jesus as personal Lord and Savior;
- (B) By a Written Statement of Good Standing (letter)** from another Baptist church (or church of like faith and practice), or from a prior church if the applicant has been scripturally baptized by immersion in a Baptist church following a profession of faith;
- (C) By Testimony of Faith**, having been previously scripturally baptized by immersion in a Baptist church (or church of like faith and practice); or
- (D) By Restoration:** If having been removed from membership by majority vote of the Church, a former member may be restored to membership contingent upon the following: **(1)** recommendation by the Pastor (or Deacons if the office of Pastor is vacant); **(2)** an appropriate public confession before the Church membership of the sin or sins involved, and satisfactorily evidencing repentance to the pastor (or the fellowship of deacons if the office of pastor is vacant.); **(3)** majority vote of the Church of acceptance back into membership.

SECTION 2 - PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MEMBER

- (A)** On becoming a member of this Church, in addition to agreeing to the **Covenant** (*Article II*), and subscribing to the **Statement of Faith** (*Article III*), each one further covenants to love, honor, esteem, and pray for the leadership, and to recognize their authority in spiritual affairs of this Church; to cherish a brotherly love for all members of this Church; to exercise his/her individual spiritual gifts; to support this Church in prayer, tithes, offerings, and with other financial support as the Lord enables; and in accordance with Biblical commands to support, through a lifestyle, the beliefs and practices of this Church. Members further covenant to quietly withdraw themselves from the fellowship, if at any time they find themselves in serious disagreement with the doctrinal or practical beliefs held by this Church.
- (B)** Only members, at least eighteen years of age, who are physically present at a duly-called meeting of the church shall be entitled to vote. There shall be no proxy or absentee voting. The eligible membership of the church has certain limited areas to exercise a vote. Members may not vote to initiate any church action, rather the vote of a member is to confirm and ratify the direction of the church as determined by the pastor and the fellowship of deacons. Members who desire that a certain motion be made or subject matter be discussed during an annual, regular, or special business meeting must file a

written recommendation with the pastor and fellowship of deacons two weeks prior to the set meeting, who will then consider the proposal and proceed according to their conscience and what they understand to be in the best interests of the church. All other motions will be presented by the pastor and/or chairman of the fellowship of deacons (or other moderator if the office of pastor is vacant) unless the pastor and/or the fellowship of deacons has delegated authority to another member and/or officer to raise certain motions. No motions will be made from the floor.

- (C) This congregation functions not as a pure democracy, but as a body under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the direction of the pastor as the undershepherd with the counsel of the fellowship of deacons. Determinations of the internal affairs of the church are ecclesiastical matters and shall be determined exclusively by the church's own rules and procedures. The pastor shall oversee and/or conduct all aspects of this church. The fellowship of deacons shall give counsel and assistance to the pastor as requested by him.
- (D) Membership in this church does not afford the members with any property, contractual, or civil rights based on principles of democratic government. Although the general public is invited to all of the church's worship services, the church property remains private property. The pastor (or in his absence, an individual designated by the fellowship of deacons) has the authority to suspend or revoke the right of any person, including a member, to enter or remain on church property. If after being notified of such a suspension or revocation, the person enters or remains on church property, the person may, in the discretion of the pastor (or in his absence, an individual designated by the fellowship of deacons), be treated as a trespasser.
- (E) A member may inspect or copy the prepared financial statements of the church and the minutes of the proceedings of church meetings and of deacons meetings, provided he shall have made a written request upon the church and the church has received the written request at least five business days before the requested inspection date.
 - (1) A member may not, without the pastor's approval (or in absence of the pastor, the fellowship of deacons), inspect or copy any record relating to individual contributions to the church, the list of names and addresses of the church members, or the accounting books and financial records of the church.
 - (2) The church may impose a reasonable charge, covering the costs of labor and material, for copies of any documents provided to the member before releasing the copies to the member.
- (F) The membership of an individual will automatically terminate upon his or her death.

SECTION 3 – DISCIPLINE OF A MEMBER (*Matthew 18:15-20; Romans 16:17-18; I Corinthians 5 1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11; Galatians 6:1; I Thessalonians 5:14; II Thessalonians 3:6, 10-15; I Timothy 5:19-20; Titus 3:10-11*)

- (A) The purpose of Church discipline is to protect the purity and testimony of the Church of Jesus Christ and to seek full restoration of the individual(s). There shall be a discipline committee consisting of the pastor and the fellowship of deacons. These men shall have sole authority in determining heretical deviations from the Statement of Faith and violations of the Church Covenant. If the pastor or a deacon is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the discipline committee. The pastor and deacons

shall be entitled to the same steps as other church members and be subject to the same discipline.

- (B) Following the pattern of Matthew 18:15-17, members are expected to demonstrate loyalty and concern for one another.
 - (1) When a member becomes aware of a personal offense by a brother, he is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore that brother. Before he goes, he should first examine himself. When he goes, he should go with a spirit of humility (Galatians 6:1) and with the goal of restoration.
 - (2) If reconciliation is not reached, a second member, either the pastor or a deacon is to accompany the one seeking to restore the matter. This second step should also be preceded by self-examination, and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration.
 - (3) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlines in subsections (1) and (2), a discipline committee, comprised of the pastor(s) and deacons (in whole or in part), as the Church representatives biblically responsible, shall hear the matter.
 - (4) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined above, such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the membership of the Church upon a majority vote of the membership present at a meeting called for the purpose of considering disciplinary action.
- (C) No matter of Church discipline may be heard by the Church unless the steps outlined above have been taken, except in the case of a public offense.

SECTION 4 – TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

- (A) Members, not under the disciplining process, may request that a written statement of good standing be sent to another church of like faith and practice. Such statement shall be sent directly to the church designated in the request.
- (B) Letters of Christian character may be granted to members uniting with a church of another denomination or persuasion.

SECTION 5 – TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- (A) The membership of any individual member shall be considered to be withdrawn without notice if the member in question has not attended a regular worship service of the Church in the preceding three months. Upon good cause being shown to the pastor, this provision for termination may be waived in the case of an individual member at the discretion of the pastor and deacons.
- (B) Missionaries, evangelists, students, members in the armed services, *et cetera*, and those unable to attend because of illness or physical infirmity may retain membership in good standing.
- (C) No member of this Church may hold membership in another church. If any member unites in membership with another church, that person is automatically terminated, without notice, from membership in this Church.
- (D) A member may resign at any time, but no written statement of good standing will be issued upon such resignation, except at the discretion of the pastor.
- (E) The membership of any individual member shall automatically terminate without notice if the member states that he or she is actively involved in any conduct described in **Article III Section 1(Q)** or **(X)** or files a lawsuit in violation of **Article III Section 1(U)**.

ARTICLE V OFFICERS

SECTION 1 – CHURCH OFFICERS

All officers must agree with, and support, this **Constitution** and **By-Laws** including the Church **Covenant** (*Article II*) and the **Statement of Faith** (*Article III*). They must faithfully support the Church in attendance and finances; endeavor to be on time; agree to refrain from worldliness; and cooperate with those in leadership in the furtherance of this Church and the cause of Christ. Failure to willingly adhere to this commitment shall disqualify that person from holding office at that time.

(A) Pastor

(1) Calling a Pastor

- (a)** Upon vacancy of the pastorate, the Deacons shall serve as the pulpit committee. The chairman of the Deacons shall serve as chairman of the pulpit committee.
- (b)** The pulpit committee shall make a report to the Church at least once a month regarding the search for a pastoral candidate.
- (c)** Names of pastoral prospects may include any recommendations by the retiring Pastor, recognizing his understanding of the Church's needs and the ability to meet those needs by certain other men.
- (d)** The pulpit committee shall contact prospects by postal mail or email. This communication shall include a questionnaire for each prospect to reflect his position on various points of doctrine, polity, and personal information. For a man to be considered as a nominee, this questionnaire must be filled out and returned to the pulpit committee.
- (e)** Each prospect shall be investigated in matters relating to the Scriptural qualifications listed in I Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:5-14.
- (f)** For a prospect to be recommended as a pastoral candidate, the pulpit committee shall vote among themselves with the result of unanimous approval.
- (g)** The pulpit committee shall present one (1) candidate at a time and that candidate will be voted upon before another prospect may be considered by the Church.
- (h)** The vote to call a pastor shall come before the Church at a specially called business meeting.
- (i)** A formal pastoral call shall consist of an affirmative vote of a quorum of the membership, resulting in at least an eighty-percent (80%) vote of approval. This vote is to be recognized as the Church confirming the call of God to the man being considered.
- (j)** Should the candidate fail to receive the affirmative vote, or refuse the call, the pulpit committee shall repeat the steps as outlined above.
- (k)** The position of the pastor is not an office with a set term but is considered to be a permanent relationship between him and the church unless he chooses to sever the relationship or is terminated by an eighty percent (80%) vote of a quorum of the membership at a duly-called special church business meeting. However, the termination of the pastor's employment can only be called to a vote of the church membership after first receiving at least an eighty percent (80%) vote of the fellowship of deacons to bring such a recommendation to the church membership.

(2) Duties of the Pastor

- (a)** The Pastor shall be at liberty to preach the whole counsel of the Word of God as the Lord leads him. He shall administer the ordinances of the Church, act as moderator at all Church meetings for the transaction of Church matters, supervise the teaching ministries of the Church, and tenderly watch over the spiritual interests of the membership. He shall serve as president of the Corporation.
- (b)** The Pastor shall appoint members of various oversight teams, as needed, at any Church business meeting. He shall publicly inform all newly elected officers of their particular function and the responsibilities of their respective offices. He shall extend the right hand of fellowship to all new members on behalf of the Church and perform such other duties as generally appertain to such a position. The Pastor shall be free to choose the Scriptural means and methods by which he exercises the ministry that God has given him.
- (c)** The Pastor may designate other men of God to supply the pulpit whether because of his illness, vacation, other ministry, or any other reason.
- (d)** Subject to the condition that they shall become a member of the Church upon assuming their duties, the Pastor may hire for the position of Assistant Pastor to aid him in carrying out his God-given responsibilities. Other staff members may be hired by the Pastor as needed on the condition that they are a member of the Church, or that they shall become a member of the Church upon assuming their duties. The Pastor may terminate staff for cause without approval, subject to standard severance terms.
- (e)** All Church staff, whether paid or volunteer, shall be under the supervision of the Pastor.

(3) Severing the Pastoral Relationship

- (a)** In the situation where the Pastor desires to sever the pastoral relationship, not less than two (2) months' notice shall be given. However, this period of time may be shortened by mutual agreement.
- (b)** If any situation should lead to the Pastor being placed under Church discipline (as with any member), he shall be relieved immediately of his pulpit, pastoral, and administrative duties.
- (c)** If the Pastor should be removed from office as the result of disciplinary action, he shall receive no less than two (2) weeks, and no more than four (4) weeks salary and the use of any Church-provided benefits for thirty (30) days. However, in the case of heresy (deviation from preaching the whole counsel of God in its literal, historical understanding) or sexual immorality, he shall be removed immediately from office with only two (2) weeks salary and no other benefits.

(B) DEACON

(1) Qualifications

- (a)** A man eligible to occupy the position of Deacon shall have demonstrated both spiritual and emotional maturity and be a member in full fellowship with this Church for at least one year.
- (b)** He shall be a capable spiritual leader meeting the requirements of I Timothy 3:8-13. As a part of his qualifications, his wife should meet the qualifications found in I Timothy 3:11.

(2) Selection

- (a)** When the need to fill or add to the office of a Deacon exists, the Pastor shall ask the Church to submit the names of scripturally competent men to fill the office.

- (b) Following the submission of recommendations, Pastor and Deacons shall evaluate those men whose names have been submitted for the purpose of obtaining mutual agreement of their Scriptural eligibility and approving the list of nominees. It is strongly recommended that paid staff members be received as candidates only in situations when no other qualified candidates are nominated, since conflicts of interest may arise due to the Pastor's role in hiring/firing.
- (c) The Pastor and selected Deacons shall interview each nominee. This interview shall review Scriptural qualifications for the office and determine the willingness of the nominee to serve if elected.
- (d) After the interviews are conducted, the Pastor and Deacons shall prepare and submit a slate of candidates to the Church at a duly called business meeting.
- (e) At the business meeting, the slate of candidates shall be submitted to the Church by paper ballot. Following the vote, available offices shall be filled by those receiving the most votes.

(3) Duties

- (a) Deacons shall assist the Pastor, in such manner as he shall request, in promoting the spiritual welfare of the Church, in the oversight of all ministries, such as administering benevolence and assisting in visitation and other evangelistic efforts of the Church.
- (b) They shall make provision for observance of the ordinances of the Church.
- (c) They may, if requested by the Pastor, consider applications for Church membership.
- (d) They shall be responsible for the pulpit supply and act as leaders for Church meetings if the office of Pastor is vacant.
- (e) They should be ready to assist with those who come forward at public invitations.
- (f) Immediately following the annual Church business meeting, the Pastor and Deacons shall assemble and elect, from their number a chairman (who shall be vice president of the corporation), a vice-chairman, a secretary, an assistant secretary, a treasurer, an assistant treasurer, a spokesperson, and a vice spokesperson.
- (g) The Deacons shall constitute the trustees of the corporation as related to Article V, Section 2 below. These trustees shall exercise only the following specific powers upon authorization by a majority vote of the members present at a duly-called church business meeting on real and personal property valued above \$10,000:
 - 1) To purchase, hold, lease, or otherwise acquire real and personal property on behalf of the Church, and to take real and personal property by will, gift or bequest on behalf of the church.
 - 2) To sell, convey, alienate, transfer, lease, assign, exchange, or otherwise dispose of, and to mortgage, or otherwise encumber the real and personal property of the Church; to borrow money and incur indebtedness for the purpose and the use of the Church; to cause to be executed, issued; and delivered for the indebtedness, in the name of the Church promissory notes, bonds, debentures, or other evidence of indebtedness and to secure repayment by deeds of trust, mortgages, or pledges, as approved by vote of the membership at special business meetings.

- 3) To exercise all powers necessary for the dissolution of the Church corporation if such action is mandated by a vote of the Church membership at a special business meeting.
- (h) In cooperation with the Pastor, Deacons shall formulate, recommend, and implement an annual budget to be approved by the Church membership.
- (i) The following positions shall be filled from among the Deacons, or appointed by the Pastor and Deacons:
 - 1) **Deacon Chairman**
 - 2) **Deacon Vice Chairman**
 - 3) **Deacon Secretary.** The Deacon Secretary shall insure a correct and permanent record of minutes for all Church proceedings, the membership roll, of all baptisms, and any certificates of ordination, licenses, and commissions. He shall endeavor to preserve all documents, papers, and letters coming into his hands during his term of office. He shall keep at the office of the church, the original constitution and By-Laws or a copy, including all amendments or alterations to the constitution and By-Laws. All records are to be kept in the Church office and delivered to the Deacon Chairman upon leaving office. He may, with the approval of the Deacons, select an assistant to aid him in the fulfillment of his responsibility.
 - 4) **Assistant Secretary**
 - 5) **Deacon Treasurer.** The Deacon Treasurer shall oversee all funds contributed to the Church and shall disburse the same as ordered by the Church. He shall present a written report of disbursements at regular Church business meetings and make a general report for the year at the annual Church business meeting. He may, with the approval of the pastor and deacons, select assistants (paid church staff) to help him in the fulfillment of his responsibility.
 - 6) **Assistant Treasurer**
 - 7) **Deacon Spokesperson**
 - 8) **Vice Spokesperson**
 - 9) **Other positions as needed for various ministries.**

(4) Terms of Office

- (a) Deacons shall be elected to serve a four-year term, or as designated in letter (d) below, and may serve a second consecutive four-year term if so elected. After serving two consecutive terms (normally eight years), a man must then take at least a one-year sabbatical from the office of Deacon. He may be retained at the Pastor's discretion, as a member of the Pastor's personal cabinet of counsellors but he has no voting privileges in the fellowship of deacons.
- (b) A minimum of four (4) elected men shall serve in the office of Deacon, conditional upon there being four men who qualify according to Article V Section 1 (b)(1) and are willing to accept their nomination and serve if elected. The number of deacons above four (4) shall be determined by the Pastor at his discretion.
- (c) A term of office shall begin with the annual Church business meeting. Deacons, however, may be elected mid-year as needed to fill the unexpired term of a vacated office. This partial term shall not count against the two-term limit designated in (a) above.
- (d) As the number of Deacons increases, new Deacons shall be elected for either a one (1)-, two (2)-, three (3)-, or four (4)-year term to insure that only approximately one-fourth (1/4) of the Deacons roll off each year.

- (e) In case a Deacon is dismissed from, or ceases active membership, his responsibility as Deacon and any other leadership responsibility he holds shall cease.

SECTION 2 – CORPORATE OFFICERS

As an accommodation to legal relationships outside the Church, the Pastor and Deacons shall serve as officers of the corporation. The Pastor shall serve as the president of the corporation; the chairman of the deacons shall serve as the vice president of the corporation; the secretary of the deacons shall serve as the secretary of the corporation; the treasurer of the deacons shall serve as the treasurer of the corporation.

ARTICLE VI MEETINGS

SECTION 1 - WORSHIP MEETINGS

Unless otherwise determined by the Pastor, the Church shall meet each Sunday for public worship both morning and evening and at least once during the week for Bible study and prayer. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed at least once each quarter.

SECTION 2 - BUSINESS MEETINGS

Church business meetings shall be held as the pastor deems necessary, at which time regular Church business shall be considered. The quorum for business meetings shall consist of the members eighteen (18) years of age or older who are present. The first Church business meeting of the fiscal year shall be the Annual Meeting. For any business or special meeting of the church, the moderator, in his sole discretion, shall have full and unilateral authority to require nonmembers to leave the meeting room and to order the immediate removal of any member or other person present who is deemed by the moderator to be disruptive to the proceedings by act or presence. The moderator shall have full authority to order the removal of all children (ages to be determined by the moderator) if the moderator determines, in his sole discretion, that circumstances so warrant. If the moderator determines that compliance with his order of removal is unsatisfactory, the moderator may, in his sole discretion, revoke the disruptive person's right to remain on the premises in accordance with *Article IV, Section 2(D)* and treat the person as a trespasser.

SECTION 3 - SPECIAL MEETINGS

- (A) The Pastor and Deacons (or Deacons if the office of Pastor is vacant or the Pastor is the subject of possible disciplinary action) may call a special business meeting by giving notice of such a meeting and providing it is announced from the pulpit in all services at least two (2) Sundays prior to said meeting.
- (B) A quorum at any special Church business meeting shall require twenty-five percent (25%) of the active Church membership at least eighteen (18) years of age. A simple majority vote of voting members present shall decide all matters, except the calling or dismissal of a Pastor; amending the **Constitution**; or purchase, sale, or mortgaging of Church property, when the required vote is at least eighty percent (80%) favoring passage.
- (C) The moderator shall determine the rules of procedure according to his sense of fairness and common sense, giving all members a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a matter. The moderator is the final authority on questions of procedure, and his decision is final and controlling.

- (D) Bible conferences, missionary conferences, revivals, *et cetera*, may be held as the Pastor deems beneficial.

SECTION 4 – FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the Church shall start August 1 and end July 31.

ARTICLE VII ORDINATION AND LICENSING

SECTION 1 - ORDINATION

- (A) Any member of this Church, who gives evidence of a genuine call of God into the work of the ministry and possesses the qualifications stated in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, may request ordination as a minister of the Gospel by this Church. Upon a conference with the pastor, and after the pastor has approved the candidate for ordination, the pastor shall call a council to examine and pass on the qualification of the candidate. The ordination council shall consist of ordained ministers of like faith to participate in the examination of the candidate.
- (B) If the candidate is found worthy of ordination by the council, the ordination council may ordain the candidate on behalf of the church.
- (C) The pastor and the chairman of the deacons shall arrange for the ordination service.

SECTION 2 – LICENSING

- (A) The church shall have the privilege and authority to license a man to exercise his gifts in the preaching of God's Word when the pastor and deacons are convinced of his Christian character and of his soundness of doctrine. To be licensed by the church he must be a member of the church. It is understood that ordination is the setting aside of a minister for a specific calling and spiritual work, whereas a license to preach is the approval and recommendation of the church that the man might be received as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- (B) The qualifications for licensing are not the same as ordination for the office of pastor or deacon. Some men are not called to a life of full-time Christian service in the ministry but may be used of God as lay-minister who preaches and teaches the Word of God while working a secular job. Divorce does not disqualify a man from being licensed to preach.
- (C) The pastor and fellowship of deacons shall examine, approve, and arrange for the licensing of any candidates.
- (D) Licensing also gives a man approval from the authority of the church to officiate wedding ceremonies and funeral services as a recognized representative of the church.

**ARTICLE VIII
TAX-EXEMPT PROVISIONS**

SECTION 1 – PERSONAL GAIN

No part of any gifts to the Church shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, officers, or other private persons, except as deemed appropriate by the Pastor and Deacons in matters of benevolence. The Church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in **Article I, Section 2** hereof.

SECTION 2 – POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

The Church shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

SECTION 3 – DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of the Church, the Deacons shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all liabilities, dispose of all assets of the Church to such organizations that operate exclusively for religious purposes and that agree with the Church's **Statement of Faith**, and also qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or any corresponding provision of any future United States Law.

SECTION 4 – RACIAL NONDISCRIMINATION

The Church shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin.

**ARTICLE IX
FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

SECTION 1 - SCRIPTURAL METHODS

The Church accepts the Bible as final authority in all matters of faith and practice. In matters of Church finances, we believe that tithes and offerings are the Biblical injunctions for giving. This giving is to be regular, systematic, and proportional, recognizing God as the Owner of all things, and *“as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give,”* recognizing personal responsibility.

SECTION 2 – DESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS

From time to time the Church, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. Contributors may suggest uses for their contribution, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the pastor and the fellowship of deacons. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to the Church other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in **Article I, Section 2**.

**ARTICLE X
Ministry of Education**

SECTION 1 – Purpose

The church believes that it is to provide the member's children with an education, which is based upon and consistent with Biblical teachings. The church believes that the home and

church are responsible before God for providing a Christian education. To this end, the church shall engage in ministries in education of keeping with the following dictates.

SECTION 2 – Church Participation

All educational programs or courses of instruction formulated and offered by the church shall be primarily for the benefit of the members of the church; however, the pastor may permit non-members to participate in church educational programs or course of instruction if he deems it is in the best interest of the church.

SECTION 3 – Staff Membership

It is preferable that all instructors, teachers and administrators shall be members of this church. However, at the pastor's discretion, he may, when necessary, hire staff and faculty to serve in Grace Christian Academy who are faithful members of other sister churches of like faith and practice.

SECTION 4 –Statement of Faith Accord

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be taught and presented in full accord with the statement of faith of the church. The church shall not hire, appoint, or retain any employee or volunteer for its educational programs who fails to adhere to or expresses disagreement with the Statement of Faith.

SECTION 5 –Unity

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be conducted as an integral and inseparable ministry of the church.

SECTION 6 –Teaching

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be conducted consistent with the teaching of the inerrant Word of God. Any assertion or belief which conflicts with or questions a Bible truth is a pagan deception and distortion of the truth which will be disclaimed as false. It is the responsibility of every instructor or teacher to present the inerrant Word of God as the sole infallible source of knowledge and wisdom.

SECTION 7 – Christian Walk

All administrators, instructors, and teachers shall continue or adopt a lifestyle consistent with the precepts which they teach, whether in or out of the classroom.

SECTION 8 – Hierarchy of Authority

(A) The pastor shall be the final authority on all matters relating to the ministry of education. The pastor shall have the authority to approve or disapprove any decision or recommendation of the fellowship of deacons on all matters relating to the ministry of education.

a. On the condition that they shall become a member of the church upon assuming duties, the pastor may hire administrators, principals, teachers and support staff to assist the pastor in carrying out the ministry of education.

(B) The fellowship of deacons shall assist and advise the pastor on matters relating to the ministry of education. The fellowship of deacons shall act as the school fellowship of deacons and shall hear matters and disputes which may arise out of the ministry of education and shall advise the pastor accordingly. All recommendations of the fellowship of deacons shall be submitted to the pastor for final approval prior to becoming effective.

The fellowship of deacons may create and recommend to the pastor school policies for governing the ministry of education consistent with the provisions herein.

ARTICLE XI INDEMNIFICATION

SECTION 1 – ACTIONS SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION

The Church may indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending or completed action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, including all appeals (other than an action by or in the right of the Church) by reason of the fact that the person is or was a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent of the Church, against expenses, including attorneys' fees, judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him in connection with the action, suit or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of *nolo contendere* or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner that he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the Church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

SECTION 2 – EXPENSES SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION

To the extent that a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in this Article, or in defense of any claim, issue, or matter in that action, suit, or proceeding, he or she may be indemnified against expenses, including attorneys' fees, actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding.

SECTION 3 – LIMITATIONS OF INDEMNIFICATION

Any indemnification made under this Article, may be made by the Church only as authorized in the specific case on a determination that indemnification of the pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent is proper in the circumstances because he has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in Section 1 of this Article. The determination shall be made (a) by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of the pastor and deacons who were not and are not parties to, or threatened with, the action, suit, or proceeding; (b) if the described quorum is not obtainable, or if a majority vote of a quorum of disinterested deacons so directs, by independent legal counsel in a written opinion; or (c) by a majority vote of the members of the church.

SECTION 4 – TIMING OF INDEMNIFICATION

Expenses of each person seeking indemnification under this Article, may be paid by the Church as they are incurred, in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding, as authorized by the pastor and the fellowship of deacons in the specific case, on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent to repay the amount taking by or on behalf of the pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent to repay the amount if it is ultimately determined that he or she is not qualified to be indemnified by the Church.

SECTION 5 – EXTENT OF INDEMNIFICATION

The indemnification provided by this Article shall be deemed to be discretionary unless otherwise required as a matter of law or under any agreement or provided by insurance

purchased by the Church, both as to action of each person seeking indemnification under this Article in his official capacity and as to action in another capacity while holding that office, and may continue as to a person who has ceased to be a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent and may inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

SECTION 6 – INSURANCE

The Church may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who is or was a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent of the Church against any liability asserted against him and incurred by him in that capacity, or arising out of his status in that capacity, whether or not the Church would have the power to indemnify him against liability under the provisions of this Article.

ARTICLE XII BINDING ARBITRATION

SECTION 1 – SUBMISSION TO ARBITRATION

Believing that lawsuits between believers are prohibited by Scripture, all members of this church agree to submit to binding arbitration any matters between church members which cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bringing any civil disagreement before a court of law, except that judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrator may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof.

SECTION 2 – NOTICE OF ARBITRATION

In the event of any dispute, claim, question, or disagreement arising out of or relating to this **Constitution** or any other church matter, the parties shall use their best efforts to settle such disputes, claims, questions, or disagreement as befits Christians. To this effect, they shall consult and negotiate with each other in good faith and, recognizing their mutual interests not to disgrace the name of Christ, seek to reach a just and equitable solution. If they do not reach such solution within a period of sixty (60) days, then upon notice by either party to the other, disputes, claims, questions, or differences shall be finally settled by arbitration as described in Section 1, above, and such Procedures for Arbitration as are adopted pursuant to the following two sections.

SECTION 3 – LIMITATIONS ON ARBITRATION DECISIONS

- (A) Should any dispute involve matters of church discipline, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures for church discipline as outlined under **Article 4, Section 3**, were followed.

- (B) Should any dispute involve the removal from office of the pastor or any church officer, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures set forth in **Article 3**, were followed.

SECTION 4 – ARBITRATION PROCEDURES

The procedures for arbitration shall be as adopted by the Pastor and the fellowship of deacons.

**ARTICLE XIII
AMENDMENTS**

This **Constitution** may be revised or amended by a minimum of an eighty-percent (80%) vote of the members present and voting, at a special business meeting of the Church, provided that said revision or amendment has been posted conspicuously in writing and announced from the pulpit fourteen (14) days before the vote is taken.

ADOPTION

This **Constitution** was adopted by a minimum of an eighty-percent (80%) vote of the quorum present and voting at a duly called meeting of the Church membership.

This **Constitution** supersedes any other constitutions and/or by-laws of Grace Baptist Church of Flower Mound, Texas.

ADOPTED THIS 27th DAY OF NOVEMBER, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD, 2022.

MARK YONAI

Deacon Secretary

DENNIS LIPPERT

Deacon Chairman

WARREN JOHNSON

Pastor

APPENDIX 1

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I. Purpose

- A. To help Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy provide a caring, safe, and secure environment for children in all phases of ministry life.
- B. To help Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy reduce its legal risk and liability exposure.

II. Biblical Foundation

Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy seeks to express God's love of children and provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to prevent child abuse of any form to our children and youth and to minister to victims of abuse and their families. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures, and ministries must stand.

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16)

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! (Matthew 18:5-7)

Our goal in response to these Biblical mandates is to maintain a safe, secure, and loving place where children may grow: a place where caregivers, teachers, and leaders (both paid and volunteer) minister appropriately to their needs.

III. Child Abuse Prevention Policy

Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy desires to be a safe place for all children and adults who attend any activity. Individuals they know and trust sometimes

victimize children. The ministry is not immune to such abuse, either by its members or by those in leadership positions. Incidents of child abuse or neglect cut across racial, social, economic and religious boundaries. Although no organization or individual can assure complete protection, this Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures Manual reflects Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy's commitment to help protect children from harm. This manual applies to all volunteer and compensated workers of Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy.

Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy will not tolerate child abuse or neglect. Your cooperation in this commitment not only reflects your concern about children's safety in this society, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all people who participate in ministry-sponsored activities with children are required to comply with the guidelines provided in this manual.

IV. Definitions

In this manual the following definitions apply:

- A. **Adult**—Any person age 18 or older;
- B. **Child or Youth**—Any person under the age of 18;
- C. **Child Abuse**—An act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. The following definitions and explanations apply in determining whether abuse of a child has occurred:
 1. **Physical Abuse**—A physical injury, threat of injury or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation, bone fracture, brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma, burns, scalding, cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions, internal injuries, poisoning, sprains, dislocations, gunshot, and stabbing wounds;
 2. **Physical Neglect**—The failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food, and malnutrition;
 3. **Sexual Abuse**—Abuse that consists of sexual contact or interactions with a child, including physical contact (fondling, sexual intercourse) and nonphysical contact (exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, voyeurism);

4. **Medical Neglect**—Refusal or failure by caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical; mental; or dental care for a condition, which if untreated, could result in illness or developmental delays;
 5. **Failure to Thrive**—A syndrome of infancy or early childhood that is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors;
 6. **Mental Abuse/Neglect**—A pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker that result in harms to a child’s psychological or emotional health or development;
 7. **Educational Neglect**—The child’s caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study; and
 8. **Bizarre Discipline**—Any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational, or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child’s behavior.
- D. **Compensated Worker**—Hourly, salaried, part-time or full-time employee who works with children at any ministry-sponsored activity;
 - E. **Volunteer Worker**—Any non-compensated individual who works with children at any ministry-sponsored activity;
 - F. **Caregiver**—Any compensated or volunteer worker, sixth grade or older;
 - G. **Mandated Reporter**—Any persons with the responsibility for the care of children is a mandated reporter. Texas State law provides that if a caregiver has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, that person shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the pastor; and
 - H. **Corporal Punishment**—Any punishment applied to the body including, but not limited to slapping, spanking, pinching, pulling, or squeezing.

V. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy, several abuse prevention measures will be used. These measures include screening of paid and volunteer workers for past child abuse convictions or expungements, provision for regular training on child abuse issues to paid and volunteer staff members, use of the two adult rule, standards for appropriate classroom discipline and open classrooms.

A. Six Month Rule

Volunteer workers must be members or regular attendees (if applicable) of Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy for at least six months prior to the time they begin serving with children in ministry-sponsored activities. (Please Note: Most ministry-related positions of service require ministry membership, only a few do not.) There is an exception to the six-month guideline. If a volunteer worker:

1. Has served in ministry with children for at least six months in the ministry he or she attended prior to coming to Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy;

2. Can provide a copy of his or her volunteer application form on file at the former ministry; and
3. Can provide a reference from the staff person with whom they worked at that ministry, they may be considered for service prior to the six months of regular attendance at Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy.

B. Staff Screening

The following procedures reflect Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy's commitment to provide protective care for all children and workers who participate in ministry sponsored activities.

1. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete the following procedures before participating in any ministry-sponsored child or student activities:
 - a. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete a standard application and disclosure form. References will be checked.
 - b. The staff person responsible for the area of ministry will conduct an interview.
 - c. All persons who work with children or students must attend orientation/training activities appropriate to the level of the volunteer or compensated worker involvement.
 - d. Applicants must sign written acknowledgement stating they have received and reviewed a copy of the *Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures Manual* of Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy.
2. No adult individual, whether serving as a volunteer or a compensated worker, who has been convicted of a crime against a child or a violent crime against another adult, will provide services in any ministry-sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
3. All volunteer and compensated workers are subject to background checks for the purpose of obtaining information regarding criminal history or child abuse findings.
4. Applications and the results of any screening will be kept confidential by authorized ministry staff.

C. Two-Adult Rule

Whenever possible, teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more per ministry nursery, Sunday school class, junior church class, and youth meeting. Concerted effort will be made to recruit sufficient numbers of volunteer teachers to permit such team teaching. Other ministry-sponsored groups of children or youth, whether they meet at the ministry or elsewhere, must have two or more adult sponsors present. When a ministry-sponsored children's youth group has both male and female participants, both male and female adult sponsors must also be present.

D. Classroom Discipline

All teachers and workers will use the following discipline measures. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the teacher or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g., "We do not throw the blocks. We use blocks for building." If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided

to another activity. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students. If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be taken to the supervisor or department head and left under their supervision. No corporal discipline or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, are to be used at any time. If isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the child's parents or guardian as soon as possible.

E. Open Classrooms

Classrooms or childcare rooms will be visited without prior notice by ministry staff, parents, or other volunteer ministry workers, e.g., Sunday school superintendent. The Sunday school superintendent or his delegate will conduct brief observations of childcare rooms and classrooms of children or youth during Sunday school and other meeting hours.

F. Driving Policies

The designated leader of the event must know each person designated to provide automobile or van transportation to or from the ministry. The driver must:

1. Be at least 18 years old;
2. Have a valid state driver's license, qualified for the vehicle being operated;
3. Have no record of convictions for the past five years for drunken driving, driving under the influence, driving with a suspended or revoked license or reckless endangerment;
4. Have proof of insurance; and
5. Never be alone in a vehicle with a child not his own.

G. Gifts

No staff, either paid or volunteer, are to give gifts to individual children or young people without the prior knowledge of the parent(s) or responsible clergy. Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be done on a group basis, or for special occasions only. Gifts may not be elaborate but should be modest and appropriate to the occasion.

H. Overnight Trips

Situations where staff members are taking children or young people out of the area for long periods of time or for overnight outings are to be carefully planned. Only known, proven staff will be permitted to sponsor/chaperone the trips. New staff or volunteers may be used as additional sponsors, but shall not be left alone with the children or young people in a situation where there are no other staff to observe. In no circumstance will one adult be allowed to take children or youth on an overnight outing.

VI. Age-Specific Guidelines for Working with Children

A. Nursery

1. A minimum of two adult female caregivers must be present in each nursery regardless of how few children are in attendance.

2. The windows of the nursery will remain uncovered to allow a clear view of all activities.
3. Ministry nursery workers who change diapers must adhere to the following procedures.
 - a. Always use rubber gloves when applying lotion or powder.
 - b. Always keep a cloth or wipe between your hand and the child.
2. Children will be released to parents at the nursery counter. Persons other than the child's parents or guardians must be authorized to pick up the child.
3. Only assigned workers are allowed to stay in the nursery or to be in the nursery area during sessions.
4. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. **Corporal discipline is never allowed.**

B. Preschool Ministry (Toddlers Through Kindergarten)

1. A minimum of two caregivers (one being an adult) must be present with each group of children regardless of how few children are in attendance.
2. The windows of classroom doors and between classrooms will remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
3. When possible, children will be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, the outer bathroom door must remain ajar while the teacher assists the child.
4. Children will be released to parents at the door of the classroom. Persons other than the children's parents or guardians must be authorized to pick up the children.
5. When children are taken out of the classroom (playground, etc.) the teachers are to take a count of the children to insure all are present.
6. Only assigned workers are allowed to stay in preschool rooms or to be in the preschool area during sessions.
7. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. **Corporal discipline is never allowed.**
8. The pastor or one delegated to do so by him must approve any children's activities that are held off site. Parental permission will be secured for off-site activities and there will be a minimum of two adults present. All activities involving taking the children off the ministry campus must be scheduled on the official ministry calendar.

C. Children's Ministry (First Through Sixth Grades):

1. A minimum of two caregivers (one being an adult) must be present with each group of children regardless of how few children are in attendance.
2. The windows of classroom doors and between classrooms will remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.

3. When possible, children will be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, the outer bathroom door must remain ajar while the teacher assists the child.
4. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age- appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. **Corporal discipline is never allowed.**
5. The pastor or one delegated to do so by him must approve any children's activities that are held off-site. Parental permission will be secured for off-site activities and there will be a minimum of two adults present. All activities involving taking the children off the ministry campus must be scheduled on the official ministry calendar.

D. Student Ministry (Seventh Grade Through Age 17):

1. A minimum of two adults must be present regardless of how few students are in attendance.
2. Organized events on or off the ministry campus will be staffed with a minimum of one adult per ten students.
3. The pastor or one delegated to do so by him must be informed in advance of all activities held on or off the ministry campus. Parental permission will be secured for off-site activities and there will be a minimum of two adults present. All activities for students, on or off the ministry campus, must be scheduled on the official ministry calendar.
4. Overnight events that are attended by students of both genders must also be chaperoned by adults of both genders. At least one adult will be present in each sleeping area.
5. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age- appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. **Corporal discipline is never allowed.**
6. It is recognized that certain counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adults and that the general guidelines for supervision of workers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. However, such counseling should only take place in a room where interior windows allow a clear view of the activities in the room.

VII. Reporting Child Abuse

If Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy receives an allegation of child abuse, it will respond with the utmost concern to the victim, parent, or other party making such an allegation. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. Without clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy's personnel will assume that such complaints are made in good faith. Persons making such complaints should have no doubt that Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse or neglect, the protection of children must be the most important concern. It is the legal responsibility of any person with responsibility for the care of children to report all cases of child abuse they observe, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse. Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the ministry, the observer or both. Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy has determined that it is the responsibility of the program staff to report all cases of suspected child abuse to the proper legal authorities. While the confidentiality of the pastor/parishioner relationship is very important, reporting reasonable suspicion of child abuse has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a previous problem and may prevent further harm to a child, that person or others.

What is reasonable suspicion? Reasonable suspicion means that there is credible evidence or a discrepant or inconsistent history in explaining a child's suspected abuse.

A report based on reasonable suspicion does not require proof that abuse or neglect has actually occurred or that the reporter witnessed the incident in question. Reporting is not a determination that child abuse or neglect has actually occurred; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child.

Because we believe children are our most important concern, Grace Baptist Church/Grace Christian Academy has adopted the following guidelines for reporting:

- A. Treat each allegation of child abuse seriously.
- B. Attempt to assure the safety and protection of persons who have been harmed.
- C. Pray for the ministry and all persons affected by the allegation.
- D. Immediately begin documenting all procedures observed in handling the allegation.
- E. Immediately notify the *{pastor, ministry leader, Sunday school superintendent}*. The *{pastor, ministry leader, Sunday school superintendent}* will initiate an internal investigation of the allegations within 24 hours of notice.
- F. Immediately notify the appropriate state office of the allegation.
- G. Immediately notify the parents if it is not known that they have previous knowledge of the allegations.
- H. Immediately notify the ministry's insurance company. As appropriate, the *{pastor, ministry leader, business manager}* shall immediately notify the ministry's insurance carrier of the possibility of a claim. If the abuse allegation does not implicate a ministry staff member or ministry volunteer, this step may be omitted.
- I. If the accused has assigned duties within the life of the ministry, that person must be temporarily relieved of his duties until the investigation is concluded.
- J. The pastor should extend whatever care and resources necessary. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the pastor or ministry leader, should under no circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation which could contaminate an official investigation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or negating the allegation.

- K. It is appropriate to show care and comfort for the alleged victim. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received or otherwise made known.
- L. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until advised to the contrary by the pastor.
- M. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or student is secured.
- N. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the alleged victim and his or her family. Showing care and support help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the alleged victim is the first priority. In some situations, ministries have responded in a negative or non-supportive manner to the alleged victim. This can increase the anger and pain of the alleged victim and his or her family. Further reconciliation can then be more difficult and the possibility of damaging litigation increases.
- O. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a caregiver, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed.
- P. If the media or other parties contact a ministry official about a pending allegation of child abuse, they should be referred to the pastor. Only the ministry leader or his designee should make comments about the allegations. The ministry leader will use the text of a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. The prepared statement shall be made only after consultation with the ministry's attorney and will include the steps the ministry has taken to protect children, such as the development and implementation of this manual, and the care and concern the ministry has for all parties involved. The privacy and confidentiality of all involved shall continue to be of primary concern.

Important Contacts and Their Phone Numbers

National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD

State Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400

Dept. Family & Protective Services 972-221-3910