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CHURCH COVENANT

Having, as we trust, been brought by Divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to Him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

We will endeavor to bring up such, as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and so seek God's help in abstaining from all drugs, food, drink and practices which harm the body or jeopardize our own or another's faith, remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

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

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

Church Constitution of Grace Baptist Church

Preamble

We, the members of Grace Baptist Church of Dansville, New York, desire to faithfully serve the Lord Jesus Christ, to foster spiritual harmony, and to conduct ourselves decently and in order (1Cor. 14:40) in accordance with the accepted tenets of churches of like precious faith. In order that we may more readily help each other in our Christian service and better set forth our position before the world, we declare and establish this constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves to be willingly and cheerfully governed.

Note: The use of the pronoun “He” as used throughout this document may stand for either male or female except when used in regards to office of elder or deacon, at which point it is meant as male.

Article I. Name

This congregation of believers shall be known as The Grace Baptist Church of Dansville, NY, as incorporated under the laws of New York State on September 11, 1983.

Article II. Purpose

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 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law), including, but not limited to, such purposes as the establishing and maintaining of religious worship; the fellowship of believers; the building, maintaining, and operating of churches, parsonages, schools, chapels, radio and television stations, rescue missions, printing shops, day-care centers, age appropriate groups, camps, nursing homes, and other ministries that the church may be led of God to establish.

The purpose of this non-profit organization is to glorify God by obedience to His command to “make disciples.” Our ministry centers on the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the administration of the ordinances of the New Testament, and the spiritual improvement of its members in accordance with the Scriptures. We trust that, as a result, sinners shall be saved and believers shall be edified. Therefore, all ministries of this church, including preaching and teaching by oratory, literature, tape, and other media; seminars, conferences, pastoral training, education, counseling, youth ministries, recreation, and support of missionaries are a part of, under the jurisdiction of, and must fulfill the purpose of this church. The church shall also ordain and license men for the ministry of the Gospel; carry out the Great Commission as given in Mt. 28:19-20 by evangelizing the unsaved by proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; educate believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Holy Scriptures, both in Sunday and weekday schools of Christian education; and carry on a global missionary program in the United States and around the world.

Our purpose is derived in part from Acts 2:41,42, and we shall focus on these purposes in all decision-making and ministries. These purposes are summarized as follows:

Worship: To give God the glory due Him in everything we do.

Discipleship: To edify believers to become fully devoted followers of Christ

Fellowship: To provide a Biblical means of mutual sharing and accountability within this body.

Evangelism: To reach lost peoples for whom Christ died.

Ministry: To meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs within the body of Christ.

A. Mission Statement

We exist to glorify God by spreading a passion for the supremacy of Jesus Christ to all peoples and by equipping believers for Christ-centered ministry.

B. Ministry Philosophy

Closely related to the purpose of the church is our philosophy of ministry. Our philosophy is based on Eph. 4:11-12. Equipping the saints is the primary task given to every elder. All believers are given at least one gift, and no believer has all the spiritual gifts. The body of Christ is made up of many individuals who are specifically given spiritual gifts, natural talents, unique personalities, and particular time schedules to fulfill the divine call of any biblical local church.

C. Ministry Emphases

We emphasize *THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE*, believing God has given us all we need to handle life in a manner that pleases Him.

We emphasize *PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION*, believing that God has a plan for every Christian's growth, and that He wants Godly lives and families built.

We emphasize *EVANGELISM*, believing that a changed life enables us to reach those without Christ in a way that is faithful and creative.

We emphasize *SERVICE*, believing that God wants our church to equip its members to do the work of the ministry, and that He wants every member serving.

We emphasize *MINISTRY TO OTHER CHURCHES*, believing that God is pleased as we seek to strengthen other elders, missionaries, and key lay leaders.

We emphasize *COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT*, believing that our church should glorify God by addressing community concerns through doing good works, meeting human needs, and sharing biblical truth.

D. Core Values

We value *TRUTH*: therefore, we are committed to teaching the entire Bible in a variety of settings with an emphasis on practical life application.

We value *WORSHIP*: therefore, we honor God in all of life as well as in the services of the church, with a variety of expressions that are consistent with His character.

We value *PEOPLE*: therefore, we seek to help individuals know Christ and live life in accordance with His will.

We value *GODLY CHARACTER*: therefore we encourage each other to become like Christ and please Him in every way.

We value *FAMILY*: therefore, we provide opportunities to strengthen marriages, homes and individuals.

We value *FRIENDSHIP*: therefore, we nurture genuine, caring relationships in a variety of settings.

We value *SERVICE*: therefore, we equip believers to use their gifts and abilities to do the work of ministry.

We value *RELEVANCE*: therefore, we apply the unchanging Word of God to the contemporary problems people face.

We value *EXCELLENCE*: therefore, we pursue optimum quality in all we do to give the right opinion of God.

We value *STEWARDSHIP*: therefore, we encourage people to be faithful with all that God has entrusted to them.

Article III. Doctrine

The doctrine of the church shall be that expressed in the Confession of Faith, based on the eternal Word of God, the Holy Bible.

Article IV. Association or Affiliation

Grace Baptist Church is an independent Baptist Church. However, we recognize the blessings and privileges of fellowship with other local bodies of believers of like faith and practice. Though autonomous, we see the benefit of partnering with various other like-minded groups that may enhance our ability to carry on the ministry of Christ and spread the gospel throughout the world. Such affiliations will be considered on an individual basis, reviewed by the elders and presented to the church for consideration.

Article V. Membership

A. Qualifications for Membership

Membership shall be extended to anyone who has given evidence of a genuine experience of regeneration through faith in and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, received believer's baptism by immersion subsequent to regeneration, and fully subscribed to the Confession of Faith, Covenant and Constitution.

Additionally, the elders shall receive from the applicant his intention to support the program of the local church by faithful attendance and service; to abide by and be governed by its Constitution, Bylaws, and Covenant; to be in substantial agreement with the Confession of Faith; and to support the church with financial contributions and attendance at its activities.

Having received instruction interview, examination and proper recommendation from the elders, every candidate shall relate his Christian experience to the members of the church. Upon a majority vote of the members present at any church service or meeting, the candidate may be brought into membership. Membership privileges and responsibilities begin immediately.

B. Application

Each applicant shall complete the church membership application form and meet with the elders, giving testimony to his salvation and acceptance of the Constitution, Confession of Faith, and Covenant. The applicant must declare his willingness to obey God in the matter of living a separated life unto the Lord. Unwillingness to sever membership in oath-bound societies shall render an applicant ineligible for membership.

C. Admission of Members

Upon recommendation of the elders, candidates may become members by:

1. Baptism by immersion and testimony of salvation.
2. Transfer of membership from another church of like faith and practice, and evidence of salvation and a spiritual walk in agreement with this church's Covenant, Constitution, and Statement of Faith. The receipt of a letter of transfer will be sought, but not required in order to admit an individual into membership. A letter shall be sent to the person's former church, informing them of the member's decision to unite with this church.
3. Public confession of sin and evidence of repentance from one who was excluded by church discipline, but desires to be restored.

In any case, it shall be required of one seeking membership that he receives membership instruction and interview with the elders to relate his personal testimony before recommendation for membership.

D. Duties of Members

1. The duties of members are set forth in general terms in the church Covenant.
2. Membership in a local church as expressed in the New Testament is deeply significant. Our Lord Jesus Christ deserves the very best use of the gifts He has entrusted to us. All happenings of life work for the express purpose of making us more like Christ in our daily lives as we already are on the account books of heaven. Members, therefore, are expected to be growing in the likeness of Christ's qualities in thought, attitude, speech, and action and to be abstaining from all appearance of evil in word and deed. Members shall be expected to lovingly respect and cooperate with the elders and officers of the church for the advancement of the work, and to faithfully attend the services of the church. Likewise, they are expected to agree with and abide by the Covenant, Confession of Faith, Constitution, and Bylaws of the church.

If at any time a member in good standing finds himself unchangingly opposed to the doctrines and procedures of this church, he will quietly, and with counsel and in cooperation with our elders, seek membership in another fellowship and not disrupt the fellowship of this church.

E. Privileges of members

This congregation functions, by congregationalism as a body under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the direction of the elders as the under shepherds. Membership in this church does not afford members with any property, contract, or civil rights based on principles of democratic government. Determination of the internal affairs of this church is an ecclesiastical matter and shall be determined exclusively by the church's own rules and procedures.

The elders shall oversee all aspects of the church. The deacons shall give counsel and assistance to them as requested by them. The membership of the church has certain limited areas of exercising a vote. Members may not vote to initiate any church action, but rather the vote of a member is to confirm and ratify the direction of the church as determined by the elders. The vote of the congregation shall be considered final.

F. Dismissal of Members

1. Members not under the discipline process may request that letters of transfer be sent to another church. Such a letter shall be granted upon request by a church regarding any member in good standing, who wishes to withdraw for good and proper reasons, by vote of the church. Such letters must be addressed to some particular church of the same faith and order and sent to the elders or clerk of the church to which the member is dismissed.
2. Members desiring to unite with a church not of our faith and order, but sound in faith and practice, may be given a Certificate of Christian Character and Standing to date, and are thereby removed from the church rolls.

3. No member of this church may concurrently hold membership in another church. If any member unites in membership with another church without the action of this church, that person's membership is automatically removed in accordance with their standing at that time.

Associate membership may be granted to a member in good standing who temporarily moves to another location (college students, service personal, etc.) and their service in that local church requires and requests such a membership. Final authority continues to rest with membership here.

Missionaries sent from this church may request a temporary moving of their membership to the local church where they are ministering. All matters requiring counsel, direction or discipline will remain the obligation of the sending church.

4. Church discipline
5. Death; no church action required

Members may not remove their own names from our rolls.

G. Discipline and suspension of members

We view discipline, as stated in God's Word, as a blessing and a sign of love (Ps. 94:12; Rev. 3:19; Prov. 6:23; Deut. 8:5; Prov. 3:11, 12; Heb. 12:5-11). Therefore, failure to discipline is unloving and hateful (Lev. 19:17; Prov. 5:23; 13:24; 19:18; Ezek. 34:1-16; Heb. 13:17; Mt. 23:1-39).

The primary goal of discipline is to train Christians to be "self-disciplined" so that they may share in the holiness of God (Heb. 12:10; Rom. 12:1,2; II Cor. 7:1; Col. 3:1-15). Its additional purposes are:

1. to guard and preserve the honor of God (Rom. 2:24; I Cor. 10:31)
2. to protect the purity of the church (Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 5:6; I Tim. 5:19-20)
3. to restore a fallen Christian to usefulness for God and fellowship with his church (Mt. 18:12-14; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; 7:8-10; Gal. 6:1,2; Js. 5:19,20)

H. Discipline Oversight

The elders shall oversee the process of discipline and shall have sole charge in determining heretical deviations from the statement of faith and violations of the church Covenant and Constitution and Statement of Faith.

I. Restoration or Discipline of Members

1. Members are expected to demonstrate special loyalty and concern for one another (I John 3:16; John 13:34, 35). When a member becomes knowledgeable of a person's offense of such a magnitude as to hinder his spiritual growth and testimony, he is to go alone to the offending party only after self-examination and rectification (Mt. 7:3). A member must always approach an offending member in a spirit of humility, with the goal of restoration (Mt. 18:15-18; Gal. 6:1). As specified in our Covenant, each member is to endeavor to make reconciliation quickly (Mt. 5:23-25a; Eph. 4:29-32). All interpersonal dealings will be characterized by kindness, truthfulness, impartiality, consideration, and Christian love. It will be the duty of each member to seek diligently to reclaim any member known to be living in disregard of his Biblical and covenantal obligations.
2. If reconciliation is not reached, a second member, usually an elder, or a deacon is to accompany the first, after following the same procedure of self-examination, showing the same spirit of humility, and having the same goal of restoration.
3. If the matter is still unresolved, the elders, who are biblically responsible to put down murmuring, must hear the matter. If the matter remains unresolved, they must recommend to the church a prayerful examination of each one's own life, a prayerful effort to

- restore the offending member, and, if no repentance is forthcoming, the exclusion of the member. Any member who refuses to repent and be restored is to be removed from the membership of the church upon a majority vote of the membership present at a regular business meeting or a meeting called for the purpose of considering disciplinary action.
4. No matter or offense may be heard unless previous biblical steps have been followed, except in the case of a public offense, such as recorded in Gal. 2:11-15.
 5. No information concerning parties not under discussion may be heard.
 6. No member may be excluded who evidences genuine fruits of repentance.
 7. When an unrepentant offending party is excluded from church membership and fellowship around the Lord's Table, all relationships (except for family) with him from that point on are to be only for the purpose of restoration (Mt. 18:17; I Cor. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:15). The entire church body should recognize a responsibility to "say the same thing" in a loving effort to restore the offending one and to maintain the church's testimony and harmony.
 8. Restoration of a sinning member shall always be the ultimate goal, so that he may once again become useful as an effective member of the body. If a sinning member, who has been disciplined out of the church, comes to the place of repentance and desires to be restored to membership, careful and specific steps shall be taken to insure that the restoration process is completed in proper order (Gal. 6).
 - a. Before coming before the congregation for confession and restoration, the disciplined person shall have come before the elders. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the realities of their repentance and to share the fruits of repentance. Also, the elders shall formulate an orderly plan to complete the process of full restoration.
 - b. Upon the satisfaction of the elders, a plan shall be put in order to allow disciplined member to come before the other members and make their confession. This confession will be conducted in a way that glorifies God and does not bring undo shame on the one confessing.
 - c. The congregation shall be given opportunity to express their unqualified forgiveness and restoration to church membership.

The elders shall move promptly when anyone is obstructing the work in any way, in order to safeguard the purity and peace of the church.

Article VI. Church Government

The government of Grace Baptist Church is elder-led congregationalism. The church has vested governing authority to the elder body, yet the will of the congregation is final. The congregation is responsible only to the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, not to any outside ecclesiastical authority. In accordance with New Testament teaching, the local congregation is responsible:

- To decide the extent of its membership (Rom. 14:1; I Cor. 5:13)
- To guard the doctrines of the faith (Rev. 2:13-16)
- To elect its own officers (Acts 6:3,5)
- To settle its own internal affairs (I Cor. 6:1-8)
- To discipline its own members (I Cor. 5:13)
- To conduct its own business and witness according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizing Christ's headship (Rev. 2:1, 7)

Therefore, major matters of business that are brought before the church should first be routed through the appropriate committee or ministry head. The committee or head, after a review and evaluation of the matter, shall forward its recommendation to the elders. It shall be the responsibility of the elders to review

any items forwarded by committees or heads. If church action is required, the elders shall present the matter to the church as an agenda item during a regular or specially called meeting.

Article VII. Meetings and Councils

A. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of this church shall be from January 1 to December 31.

B. Annual Meeting

The annual meeting shall be held on the first Wednesday of December, at which time election of officers, approval of the annual budget, presentation of the previous year's reports, and other business may be transacted. Appointment of deacons, church treasurer, clerk, financial secretary, ministry heads, and committees deemed necessary will be presented for approval.

In the event that a position is vacated, the elders may appoint someone to fill the position for the remainder of the original term.

C. Church Business

1. Church business may be conducted at any of the regular meetings of the church. Routine business may be transacted at any stated service of the church without regard to the requirement of paragraphs following.
2. Major business shall have previous announcement the Sunday before the date of the meeting. At such a meeting, one third of the members shall constitute a quorum.
3. Quarterly meetings shall be held the third Wednesday of January, April, July and October, at which time important information and direction may be given, and the clerk and treasurer shall report. Any other business may be conducted only as it has been placed on the agenda and printed two Sundays before the meeting. Exceptions will be by the approval of the elders.
4. The annual meeting shall be the first Wednesday of December.
5. Special meetings: The elders may call a special meeting by giving the church notice of such a meeting and the purpose for which it is called, at least one Sunday, and not less than one week, prior to the said meeting.
6. Emergency business: In a situation requiring immediate action, the elders will act for the church and report as soon as possible in a special business meeting duly called. The congregation will then ratify or annul their action.
7. Only members may vote.
8. Quorum: One third (1/3) of the voting membership present at any meeting shall constitute a quorum. Members who are homebound, serving as missionaries away from the local area, attending college away from the local area, or serving in the armed services away from the local area, shall not be counted among the eligible voting membership when determining a quorum. A simple majority of voting members at a meeting shall be necessary to carry a vote on normal business matters.
9. Moderator: An elder shall serve as moderator except when he shall deem it advisable to appoint a moderator. The presiding officer at any business meeting has the responsibility and authority to conduct the meeting in a fitting and orderly way, in accordance with the Scripture and the spirit of this Constitution.

(I Cor. 14:30). For any meeting under this article, the moderator shall have full and unilateral authority, based on his personal discretion, to order the immediate removal of any member or person present that he deems to be disruptive to the proceedings by act or by presence. The moderator shall have the full and sole authority to order the removal of all children (ages to be determined by moderator) if he determines that circumstances so warrant.

If the moderator determines that compliance with his order of removal is unsatisfactory, he may, in his sole discretion, order an usher or other church officer to escort a disruptive person out of the meeting place or, in the alternative, order a postponement of the meeting until a future date when satisfactory compliance may be assured.

D. Councils

If deemed necessary and advisable by request from this church, a council may be formed from churches of like faith and order to assist us. Such a council shall exist only for the duration of the particular meeting and only in an advisory capacity. Since the local church is autonomous, the council's advice and recommendation shall be taken under serious consideration, but the final decision shall be that of Grace Baptist Church alone.

Article VIII. Officers and Officials

“And He, Jesus Christ, is the head of the body, the Church,” (Col.1:18). As the Head of His Church, Jesus Christ governs His local churches through a plurality of elders, (bishops, overseers, pastors). These are God-ordained, biblically qualified men, whom He appoints as gifts to the church. (1 Tim 3:1-13; Phil 1:1 and Eph 4:11-12) The combined wisdom and counsel of godly men helps assure that decisions are not self-willed or self-serving.

A Elders

1. Qualifications for Elders: An elder shall be a mature man, who exhibits consistent, ongoing spiritual growth, has a firm understanding of Scripture and possesses the skills necessary for teaching and for leadership. (1 Tim. 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9; and 1 Pet 5:1-2)
2. Selection of Elders: The body of elders will recognize individuals whom God has called (1 Timothy 3:1, Acts 20:28), who meet the qualifications and whose daily lives demonstrate they are suitable for eldership. Through much prayer and careful examination, the elders shall come to a unanimous agreement concerning his appointment. He will then be presented to the membership for ratification at any regular or special business meeting and subsequently recognized publicly through the laying on of hands.
3. Termination: Resignation shall be by letter to the elder body and by public announcement to the congregation. Termination of office shall occur within 60 days and not before 30 days of the submission of a resignation. The elder shall continue in office until he resigns or until his resignation is requested at a special meeting called for that purpose. These things shall be handled prayerfully and the process documented carefully. There are several areas that could be addressed:
 - issues of obvious sin,
 - failure to fulfill constitutional duties, or
 - a clear and obvious lack of ministry effectiveness, as determined by the elders.

Guidelines by which actions would take place, if at any time the elder's methods or his relationship with the church shall be deemed unduly strained or unsatisfactory: the elder body shall discuss such matters with him, and seek to resolve any conflicts, problems or misunderstandings. If the situation continues unresolved, the elders may bring a recommendation to the congregation in the following manner:

- a. Formal accusations must be submitted to the elder body in writing, with personal signatures at a meeting of the elders and shall not be considered unless supported by the testimony of at least two witnesses. (1 Tim. 5:19; Matt. 18:15-17)
- b. The elders must have a unanimous opinion among themselves before the matter can be brought before the church. The matter will be openly discussed with the elder, and no secret meetings will be conducted. The question of severing the elder relationship may be considered at any regular or special business meeting by the presentation of the elder body, providing that public notice of this meeting has been given two successive Sundays before this meeting. A majority vote is required and shall be by written ballot. If the elder relationship is severed, four week's severance pay shall be given, and the elders shall decide who will fill the pulpit during those

- four weeks.
- c. In the case of serious error in conduct, the elder body may suspend the ministry of said elder immediately by at least a 75% vote of the elders present in a special meeting about which all elders have been notified. Such action shall be followed by the normal procedure described above.
 - d. If a vocational elder is dismissed because of disciplinary action, he shall vacate the pulpit immediately. A severance pay of four week's value will end all church responsibilities. The elder body may recommend any different arrangements regarding severance pay or housing to the congregation for approval.
 - e. In the absence of the teaching elder, the elders shall seek to select a replacement through the selection process. (Section 2)
 - f. The task of eldership is significant and may be carried out while continuing to care for family and personal work responsibilities. It may be necessary to reduce or take leave of some of their responsibilities of eldership for periods of time. In recognition of this, sabbatical times will be arranged through mutual consent of the elders. (A process of mutual accountability among the elders safeguards against the continuation of office of an elder who has rendered himself unqualified for future participation).

4. Duties of Elders

The elders are called by God to shepherd the church by leading and teaching the flock. They shall be responsible for the oversight of all ministries and resources of the church and may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Pt 5:1-4).

a. In General:

Elders shall examine and instruct prospective members, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances, nurture, and equip members for the work of the ministry. They encourage sound doctrine in and practice, admonish and correct error, share in the pastoral care of the congregation, perform marriage ceremonies at his discretion, officiate at funerals of members of the church and non-members at his discretion, maintain church discipline, participate in installation of newly designated elders, and perform other constitutional, scriptural and general pastoral duties.

The elders shall teach and lead; (Acts 20:28, 1 Pet 5:10-13; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17,18; Titus 1:9; Acts 6:4; 15:24; 20:27) Pray; (Acts 6:4; James 5:14) Exhort and refute; (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim. 4:14) Protect the flock; (Acts 20:17, 28-31; Titus 1:5-6, 9) Exemplify a godly pattern of conduct (1 Pet. 5:3); Lead by Christ-like example (Acts 15:22); Manage the church body (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12; 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:1,2); and Meet needs; (Js. 5:14; Acts 20:35).

b. In Particular:

The teaching elder's duties

The teaching elder (sr. pastor), because of his particular calling and gifts will be seen as the first among a council of equals. (1 Tim. 5:17) Along with the general duties together with the other elders, he will particularly give himself primarily to:

- prayer,
- the studying of the Word of God, and
- preaching and expounding the Word of God.

5. Authority

The authority of the elders is a very real authority. God's people therefore, are to function in submission to the authority vested in each elder. Therefore, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church and establish policies and practices for the church consistent with the

mission statement, the constitution and covenant of Grace Baptist Church. They will have complete authority in questions relating to scriptural truth. Decisions shall be rendered by a unanimous vote of all of the elders.

Regarding major decisions of church life, such as those having to do with receiving and dismissing members, corrective discipline, recognition of officers, or the sale of a church building, the elders shall provide definitive leadership and obtain the consent of the local church as a body. (Heb. 13:17; Acts 6:2-6; 9:26; 1Cor. 5:4-5; 13, 2 Cor. 2:6)

The authority of every elder is the same. Thus, every elder has equal authority in the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder, this diversity must not undermine unity among the elders. (Acts 20:28; Gal 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:17)

6. Organization

- a. The elder body will meet on a regular basis. Special meetings may be called when necessary. A quorum, which shall consist of at least 51% of the total number of elders, shall be present to conduct business.
- b. The elder body will annually select from their number a chairman and secretary.

As an accommodation to legal relationships outside the church, an appointed elder shall serve as president of the corporation; an appointed elder or deacon as vice president; the church clerk as secretary; and the treasurer as treasurer. The deacons shall act as trustees of this corporation.

B. Senior Pastor

1. **QUALIFICATIONS:** The senior pastor, as the teaching elder, must be Baptist in name and conviction. He should be in substantial agreement with the church's doctrinal statement (minor and secondary matters of disagreement will be discussed among the elders and related to the congregation) and agree to uphold the Covenant and Constitution of GBC. As with all elders, he must be qualified in light of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Neither the senior pastor nor his spouse shall have been divorced.
2. **THE CANDIDATURE:** The process of selection shall begin with the elders acting as the pulpit committee. They may determine to, at any point in the process, add to their number such people as they deem necessary to assist them in the process.
3. The elders shall seek men to fill the pulpit who may or may not be considered potential candidates. They shall conduct whatever interviews they deem necessary to determine who they may wish to move to the level of candidature.
4. Only one candidate shall be considered at a time. As part of the candidature, he will preach and teach in at least one entire Sunday of services, meet with the pulpit committee and have opportunity to interact in a questioning time with the congregation. It is highly recommended that the candidate and his family spend one entire week, (ideally Sunday through Sunday) in our local area, interacting in the life of the church and ministering as opportunity allows.
5. **The call:** Upon the recommendation of the elders and/or pulpit committee, the senior pastor shall be elected at a special or regular meeting of the church called for such a purpose. Public notice of such action shall have been from the pulpit two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the meeting. At least 75% of ballots cast must reflect a positive vote in order for a call to be extended to the candidate.
6. The pastoral call shall be for an indefinite period of time.

C. Church Staff

1. When the services of paid personnel other than the senior pastor are needed, the church shall hear

a recommendation from the elders so that they may authorize the position and salary. All church staff, whether paid or volunteer, shall be under the supervision of the elders, who, have the sole authority to hire, appoint, or dismiss the same.

2. Staff members, except secretarial and custodial:
 - a. The elder shall recommend to the congregation the person to be employed in the position created. The staff member may be called at a special or regular meeting of the church. Public notice and purpose of such meeting shall have been given two previous Sundays. 75 % of the ballots casts are necessary for a call. Only one candidate may be considered at a time.
 - b. All staff members are directly responsible to the elders in the performance of their duties. Loyalty to the church and its leadership is expected. Each staff member shall understand that continuance of his ministry is subject to the elder body.
3. Secretarial Staff Members
Upon creation of secretarial position(s), secretaries shall be hired by, shall be directly responsible to, and may have their positions terminated by the elders.
4. Custodial and Maintenance Staff Members:
Upon creation of custodial and maintenance position(s), personnel shall be hired by the elders and shall be directly responsible to them, and may have their positions terminated by them.
5. Dismissal of Staff Members:
It is understood that dismissal of a staff member is not subject to church action or review.
6. Due to changing circumstances, it may be necessary to vary the number and titles of personnel employed on the church staff.

D. Deacons

The office of deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. The church shall recognize, in accordance with the elders recommendation and in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. They shall be men who are giving of themselves in service to the church, who possess particular gifts of service and who meet the biblical qualifications.

1. Appointment: Deacons shall be appointed by the elders and presented to the church at the annual meeting for ratification. Additional deacons may be appointed at others times when the elders deem it necessary to best serve the needs of the church body.
2. Duties: Deacons are responsible primarily to administer the physical and benevolent concerns of the church as well as its business affairs. (Acts 6:1-4) They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with the elder body.
 - Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of members and attend to the accommodations for public worship.
 - They shall support and encourage members to assist one another in the use of their gifts in ministry and shall work in cooperation with those who have gifts of administration.
 - At each annual meeting, in cooperation with the finance committee and with approval from the elders, the deacons shall present to the church, an itemized budget for congregational approval.
 - The deacons shall receive, hold and disburse a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.
 - The deacons, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.
 - They shall have the authorization, when necessary, to make capital expenditures not to exceed \$1,000.00.
3. Organization: The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall set apart, as needed, men who evidence the scriptural qualifications for that office. (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13)
 - a. Annually, the deacons shall appoint from their number a chairman and a secretary. Other similar organizational appointments may be made at their discretion.

- b. They shall keep accurate records of all meetings, which shall be submitted to the elder body.
4. Meetings: The deacons shall meet regularly enough to carry out their functions in a timely and orderly fashion. The elders may request meetings with the deacons for the purpose of encouraging, goal setting and cooperation in serving the needs of the congregation.
5. Termination: Resignation shall be by letter to the deacon and elder bodies and by public announcement to the congregation. Termination of office shall occur within 60 days and not before 30 days of the submission of a resignation. The deacon shall continue in office until he resigns or until his resignation is requested at a special meeting called for that purpose. These things shall be handled prayerfully and the process documented carefully. There are several areas that could be addressed:
 - issues of obvious sin,
 - failure to fulfill constitutional duties, or
 - a clear and obvious lack of ministry effectiveness, as determined by the deacons and elders.

Guidelines by which actions would take place, if at any time the deacon's methods or his relationship with the church shall be deemed unduly strained or unsatisfactory, the elder body shall discuss such matters with him, and seek to resolve any conflicts, problems or misunderstandings. If the situation continues unresolved, the elders and deacons may bring a recommendation to the congregation in the following manner:

- a. Formal accusations must be submitted to the deacon and elder bodies in writing, with personal signatures at a meeting of the elders and deacons and shall not be considered unless supported by the testimony of at least two witnesses. (1 Tim. 5:19; Matt. 18:15-17).
- b. The deacons and elders must have a unanimous opinion among themselves before the matter can be brought before the church. The matter will be openly discussed with the deacon, and no secret meetings will be conducted. The question of severing the deacon relationship may be considered at any regular or special business meeting by the presentation of the elder and deacon bodies, providing that public notice of this meeting has been given two successive Sundays before this meeting. A majority vote is required and shall be by written ballot.
- c. In the case of serious error in conduct, the elder and deacon bodies may suspend the ministry of said deacon immediately by at least a 75% vote of the officers present in a special meeting about which all officers have been notified. Such action shall be followed by the normal procedure described above.
- d. The task of the deacons is significant and may be carried out while continuing to care for family and personal work responsibilities. It may be necessary to reduce or take leave of some of their diaconal responsibilities for periods of time. In recognition of this, sabbatical times will be arranged through mutual consent of the elders and deacons.

Deacons shall continue to be loyal to their Lord, their church, the elders, the church Constitution, Covenant, Confession of Faith, and their office. Should a deacon be negligent in any of these, or at the request of the elders, he shall vacate his office as deacon.

E. Other Officials

1. Clerk

The clerk shall be appointed annually by the elders and approved by the church. The clerk shall keep an accurate record of all church proceedings: membership roll, baptisms, letters of transfer, certificates of ordination, licenses and commissionings. Also, he/she shall sign letters and communications done by the authority of the church, keep a record of the membership showing last known address and date and manner of admission or removal, safeguard all such records

and make them available to the elders, and give reports of minutes of church meetings.

The church clerk shall preserve all documents, papers, and letters. A copy of all records shall be kept at another secure location outside the church in case of fire or other damage. All records are to be kept in the church office and delivered to any successor upon leaving office.

2. Treasurer

Principle Function: From recommendations of the finance committee, the elders shall appoint a treasurer annually. He shall be responsible for general accounting and paying of bills, as well as reporting.

Duties:

- a. keep all checking, savings and investments accounts as approved by the budget and upon request, render a current report to the elders. Reports shall be submitted at quarterly and annual business meetings, and for the clerk's records
- b. arrange for audits
- c. serve on the finance committee

A detailed job description is maintained in the Finance Policy and Procedures Manual.

3. Financial Secretary

Principle function: A financial secretary shall be appointed by the elders and shall maintain the church financial giving records and prepare donor receipts.

Duties:

- a. keep accurate records of giving and provide receipts for income tax records
- b. appoint counters and oversee the counting and deposits of monies
- c. handle information discreetly
- d. serve as a member of the finance committee

A detailed job description and guidelines for carrying out this ministry are maintained in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

4. Sunday School Superintendent

The Sunday School Superintendent shall be approved and appointed annually by the elders. He shall:

- a. be responsible to the elders, or a staff member so designated by the elders, for the leadership of the Sunday School.
- b. appoint, in counsel with the elders (and staff member, if applicable), all heads of departments; teachers and helpers; and secretaries as needed, and prescribe for them their duties and standards. Standards shall be approved by the elders.
- c. supervise use of materials, classrooms, and equipment.
- d. furnish teachers with means of requisition of supplies, literature, and equipment, and authorize purchase of the same within limits of the budget.
- e. conduct Sunday School staff meetings at least quarterly.
- f. check with teachers on a regular basis to ascertain the total needs of the departments and to encourage the best performance of the ministry.
- g. encourage and promote visitation, enlistment of workers, training of teachers, and stimulation to advance the Sunday School and church.
- h. supervise accurate record keeping.

5. Head Usher

A head usher shall be appointed annually by the elders. He shall:

- a. select, with prior approval of the elders, ushers sufficient to care for the needs of the services of the church.
- b. instruct and supervise the ushers, providing each with a list of instructions for specific duties.
- c. direct in assisting the worshipper in a way which shall enhance the spiritual atmosphere of the services.
- d. be sensitive to and handle emergencies as they arise.
- e. supervise the reception of tithes and offerings and secure such as prescribed in our Financial Policies and Procedures Manual.
- f. record attendance at all services.
- g. conduct training.

6. Host or Hostess (Greeters)

A Host or Hostess shall be appointed by the elders and shall select, with prior approval of the elders, sufficient co-workers to assist in the ministry of greeters. He shall instruct and supervise greeters and be responsible to the elders for this ministry.

Any worker or officer who neglects his duties as outlined in this constitution, may be removed from his ministry position at the discretion of the elders, and another may be appointed to serve the remainder of the term.

A public installation service shall be held at a church service following the annual meeting, in which all newly elected and appointed officers and officials of the church are to be dedicated to their ministries.

Article IX. Finances

A. Finance Committee

The elders, church treasurer, and finance committee shall correlate estimates of expenditures from various ministries of the church. The committee shall present a proposed budget to the deacons for approval, and then present a recommendation to the church at the annual meeting. They will also recommend policies and procedures for handling finances as well as investments and financial planning.

B. Financing

All contributions shall be free-will offerings. Envelopes shall be furnished so that a record can be kept and a statement issued for income tax purposes. The church strongly teaches Biblical principles of finance for personal life, church business, and church giving. We believe in the principle of tithing (Mal. 3:10), and proportionate “grace” giving (I Cor. 16:2), and encourage tithing as a starting point in giving and as a reminder that all belongs to our Lord.

Financial strategy: Since we are only managers of what God has given us, we must be good stewards of that trust. We strive to be conservative in our stewardship of the tithes and offerings that have been entrusted to us through the giving of God’s people. The Bible permits borrowing; however, it gives many warnings of the danger of borrowing and requires a secure means of repaying the loan. Our financial strategy for buildings is to raise as much of the capital as possible and borrow as little as possible. Our objective is to pay back a loan over a short term rather than a long term.

For reasons stated herein, there will be no means of raising funds except by giving. No funds shall be contributed to the church through the sale of any article of merchandise for profit by any organization under the jurisdiction of the church; the only exception is the sale of such books, literature, and tapes that have progressive sanctification as their sole objective. The sale of tickets for any church function shall only be for the cost of financing the same and handled in keeping with state law for tax-exempt organizations.

Any expenditure less than \$1,000.00 that is not authorized in the regular budget must be authorized by the elders or deacons. Any expenditure of more than \$1,000.00 that is not authorized in the regular budget must be approved by vote of the church.

A review by internal or external audit shall be made every year and at the change of treasurer.

C. 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 contributions, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or contributions otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the elders. 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 II.

The giving of other than money gifts must be approved by the elders and handled in accordance with our Policies and Procedures Manual.

D. Tax Exempt Provisions

Private Inurement:

No part of the net earnings of the church shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for the service rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article I.

Political Involvement:

No substantial part of the activities of the church shall involve the carrying on of propaganda or other legislation attempting to influence any political positions. 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.

Article X. Missions

This church shall carry on a zealous missions program in accordance with Mt. 28:19,20 and shall support missionaries, Christian schools, and agencies, and compassion ministries that are engaged in carrying out the New Testament program of worldwide evangelism. All individuals and agencies shall be in hearty agreement with the Church Doctrinal Statement. They will be thoroughly investigated by the Missions Committee before being approved by the elders and presented for vote to the church.

Procedures and policies regarding interviews, evaluations, support levels, and recommended missionaries shall be contained in a separate Missions Policy, (maintained and administered by the Missions Committee), and shall be kept up to date in our Policies and Procedures Manual.

Article XI. Regulations

A. Church Agencies

All organizations and agencies of this church are considered to be responsible to and under the general direction of the church. No organization shall engage in any practice or policy contrary to the position and purpose of this church as stated in the Confession of Faith and this Constitution.

B. Eligibility of Leaders

All teachers, sponsors, and officers of organizations shall be members of this church. They shall be in agreement with the Confession of Faith, Covenant, and Constitution and shall evidence by their lifestyle a mature walk with Christ.

All workers, of the church voluntary or paid, shall submit to our Child Abuse Prevention screening system and work in accordance to those guidelines.

Article XII. Recommendations

Any recommendation or suggestion considered of special interest to the church shall first be brought to the elders for consideration before being presented to the membership.

Article XIII. Buying, Selling, and Mortgaging

The officers of this church shall not buy, sell, or mortgage property without authorization by a vote of the church at a meeting that has been previously announced for that purpose and in accordance with business procedures under Article VII.

Article XIV. Racial Nondiscrimination

The church shall have a racially nondiscriminatory policy and therefore shall not discriminate against members, applicants, students, and others on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin.

Article XV. Dissolution of Corporation

In the event that a decision is made to dissolve this corporation, known as The Grace Baptist Church of Dansville, NY, the trustees shall, previous to dissolution of the corporation and upon agreement by 2/3 vote of the church:

Pay or make provision for payment of all the liabilities of the church, and assign all properties to one or more fundamental Baptist, non-profit organization(s), (such as churches, missions, schools or associations, formed and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986).

Assets may be distributed only to organizations that agree with the church's Statement of Faith. None of the assets shall be given to any individual.

Article XVI. Indemnity Clause

Members of Grace Baptist Church shall agree not to pursue civil litigation against the corporation called Grace Baptist Church, its members, its officers, its paid staff, its deacons, or its elders. This provision will not prevent a member from pursuing a claim for personal injury against an insurance company.

Article XVII. Amendments

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular or special business meeting, providing that notice of the constitutional change shall have been given from the pulpit for two Sundays prior to the meeting, and the amendment shall have been presented in detail at a previous business meeting after having been presented to the elders for consideration.

This Constitution shall be reviewed periodically and at least every five years.

Article XVIII. Cancellation

This Constitution, as revised and adopted on this 16th day of September, 2009, at a duly called meeting of the church in which a quorum was present shall supersede and cancel all other constitutions and amendments of Grace Baptist Church and shall become effective September 16, 2009.

Date

Barb Leaman
Church Clerk

CONFESSION OF FAITH

I. Of the Scriptures, we believe that the Holy Bible, as originally written:

- (a) is verbally (every word) and plenary inspired (equally in all parts) inspired and the product of God working through Spirit-controlled men (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pt. 1:19-21, 25; Acts 1:16; 28:25; Ps. 119:89; Rev. 22:18,19 1 Cor. 2:7-14).
 - (b) truth without admixture of error, and the complete and inerrant authority for faith and practice, and accurate in all areas of science and history to which it speaks (Ps. 119:105, 130, 160; Lk. 24:25-27, 44, 45; Jn. 17:17).
 - (c) shall remain to the end of the age, the only complete and final revelation of the will of God to man; the true center of Christian union and the supreme authority by which all human conduct, creed and opinions should be tried, and that men in their relationship with God must move from truth to experience and not from experience to truth (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Mt. 7:21-23; Ps. 119:89; Prov. 30:5, 6; Rom. 3:4; 1 Pet. 1:23; Rev. 22:19; John 12:48; Is. 8:7-11; Jn. 1:45-47; 5:39).
1. By “THE HOLY BIBLE,” we mean that collection of sixty-six books from Genesis to Revelation that, as originally written, not only contains and conveys the Word of God, but is the very Word of God. This revelation from God is complete and no further revelation is being given.
 2. By “INSPIRATION,” we mean that the books of the Bible were written by holy men of old as they were moved by the Holy Spirit in such a definite way that their writings were supernaturally inspired and free from error as no other writings have been or ever will be.

II. Of the True God, we believe:

Of God The Father

- (a) that there is only one living and true God who is infinite in every excellence; Maker, Sustainer, and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness; and worthy of all worship, confidence, and love (Ex. 15:11; 20:2, 3; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5-7; Rev. 4:11; Ps. 83:13; 1 Thess. 1:9; Jn. 5:26; 1 Jn. 5:7; Gen. 1:1; 2:7; Col. 1:16; Jn.17:5; Eph. 4:6; Mt. 1:18-23).
- (b) that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct, but harmonious offices (Mt. 28:19; Jn. 15:26; I Cor. 12:4-6; Eph. 2:18; 2 Cor. 13:14).

Of Jesus Christ the Son

- (a) that He is absolute Deity; that He was divine as no other man can be, being very God of very God, existing from all eternity, and living as co-equal with the Father and the Spirit (Jn. 1:1-3; 10:30; 14:9; Col. 2:8-10; Heb. 1:2, 3, 8; Mic. 5:2).
- (b) that, in His voluntary humiliation, He did not lay aside His Deity; but He laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, assumed the place of a Son, and took on an existence appropriate

to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Phil. 2:5-8; Mt. 1:21-22; 28:1; Mk. 14:61, 62; Jn. 10:30, 32, 33; 14:9; 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:15-17; 1 Jn. 1:1, 2; 5:20).

- (c) that at His incarnation He was miraculously begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary as no other man was or ever can be born (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:26-35; Jn. 1:1,14).
- (d) that He accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (Jn. 10:15; Rom. 3:24,25; 5:8; 1Pt. 2:24).

Of the Holy Spirit

- (a) that He is a divine Person, equal with God the Father and Son, and of the same nature (Jn. 14:16, 17, 26; Matt. 28:19; Heb. 9:14).
- (b) that He was active in creation (Gen. 1:1-3).
- (c) that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled (2 Thess. 2:7).
- (e) that He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment (Jn. 16:8-11).
- (f) that He bears witness to and empowers the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony (Jn. 15:26, 27; Acts 5:30-32).
- (g) that His purpose in this age is to glorify the Son, and that He never depreciates the completeness that is in Jesus Christ by exalting anyone or anything, above or as an addition to, Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 12:3; Col. 2:10).
- (h) that He is the agent of the new birth (Jn. 3:5, 6).
- (i) that He indwells, seals, baptizes, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies and helps believers until the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13, 14, 4:30; Jn. 14:26, 16:13; Acts 11:16; Rom. 8:9, 14, 16; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 1:32 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:9-11, 26, 27).
- (j) that He gives to the believer at salvation, gift(s) of service according to His will (1 Cor. 12:11) and to be used only for the edification of the body (1 Cor. 13:5b; Eph. 4:16); That He glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (Jn. 16:13,14; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 2 Cor. 3:18). Speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Cor. 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:7-12; Heb. 2:1-4).

III. Of the Devil, or Satan, we believe that Satan is a distinct personality who:

- (a) was created by God and was once holy and enjoyed heaven's honors, but, through pride and ambition to be as the Almighty, fell (Isa. 14:12-13; Ezk. 28:15-17).
- (b) drew after him a host of angels (Rev. 12:9; Jude 6; 2 Pet.2:2; Jn. 14:30).
- (c) is now the malignant prince of the power of the air, and the unholy god of this world (1 Thess. 3:5; Matt. 4:1-3).

- (d) is man's great tempter (1 Pet. 5:8).
- (e) is the enemy of God and His Christ (Zech. 1:3; 1 Jn. 3:8; Mt. 13:25, 37-39; Lk. 22:3, 4).
- (f) is the accuser of the saints (Rev. 12:10).
- (g) is the author of all false religions, the chief power promoting the present apostasy (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Mk. 13:21, 22).
- (h) is the lord of the Anti-Christ (1 Jn. 4:3; 2 Jn. 7; 1 Jn. 2:22).
- (i) is the author of all the powers of darkness (Rev. 13:13, 14; 2 Thess. 2:8-11).
- (j) although powerful and to be respected, is not omniscient, omnipotent, nor omnipresent and cannot overcome the believer who is submitting in obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word in faith (Js. 4:7; 1 Jn. 4:4).
- (k) is destined to find defeat at the hands of God's Son, through His death on the cross (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 19:11, 16, 20; Rev. 12:7-9; 20:1-3), and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire, a place prepared for him and his angels (Rev. 20:10-15; Mt. 25:41).

IV. Of the Creation, we believe in the Genesis account of creation, and:

- (a) that it is to be accepted literally, and not allegorically or figuratively. God created the world in six literal 24-hour days. We reject evolution, the Gap Theory, the Day-Age theory and Theistic Evolution as unscriptural theories of origin (Gen. 1:1; Ex. 20:11; Acts 4:24; Col. 1:17; Heb. 11:3; Jn. 1:3; Rev. 10:6; Rom. 1:20; Acts 17:23-26; Jer. 10:10).
- (b) that man was created directly by God and in God's own image and after His own likeness (Gen. 1:27; 1 Cor. 11:7).
- (c) that man's creation was not a matter of evolution or evolutionary change of species, or development through long periods of time from lower to higher forms (Gen. 2:7, 21-23; Jn. 1:3).
- (d) that all animal and vegetable life was created directly, and in such a way as to reproduce "after its own kind" (Gen. 1:11, 24; Col. 1:16, 17).

V. Of Man and His Fall, we believe:

- (a) that man was created in innocence and in the image of God (Gen. 1:27).
- (b) that by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and happy state (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12, 19).
- (c) that consequently, all men are now sinners by inheritance from Adam and by individual choice and, until regenerated, are dead in sin, totally depraved and utterly unable to remedy his lost condition (Gen. 1:26,27; Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 3:10-13, 23).
- (d) that all men are by nature utterly void of the righteousness required by the law of God, and definitely inclined to evil (Rom. 3:11; Gal. 3:22; Eph. 2:1-3, 12; Ps. 40:12).
- (e) that man is under just condemnation without defense or excuse (Rom. 1:19, 20, 2:1, 12-15; 3:9-20, 23).

(f) that man's only hope of eternal life is through redemption in Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:3, 5; Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8, 9; Gal. 3:26).

VI. Of Christ's Atonement For Sin, we believe:

(a) that the salvation of sinners is wholly of God's grace (Eph. 2:8, 9; Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:24, 25) and through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, who, by appointment of the Father, voluntarily took upon Him the form of a man, was tempted in all points as we are yet without sin in nature or deed, honored the Divine Law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins (Jn. 3:16; Mt. 18:11; Phil. 2:7, 8; Heb. 2:14, 4:15; Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 4:10; Isa. 53:6; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21).

(b) that His atonement consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was the voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ, the Lord, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree (Jn. 10:18; Phil. 2:8; Gal. 1:4; 1 Pt. 2:24; Isa. 53:11; Heb. 12:2; 1 Pt. 3:18).

(c) that, having risen bodily from the dead, He is now enthroned in heaven and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection. He is in every way the suitable, compassionate, all sufficient Savior and the mediator for His believer priests (Isa. 53:12; Heb. 7:25, 9:12-15, 10:10, 12, 14, 18; 1 Jn. 2:2).

(d) that the blessings of this atonement are given to all who believe from the heart and confess to God this Lord and Savior as his own Lord and Savior. It is the immediate duty of man to obey the command to accept this offer of mercy (Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:8, 9, 10).

VII. Of Salvation By Grace, we believe:

(a) that in order to be saved, all men must be born again (Jn. 3:3; Gal. 3:26).

(b) that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17).

(c) that it is instantaneous, and not a lengthy process (Jn. 3:5-7; Acts 16:30-33).

(d) that in the new birth, the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God (2 Pt. 1:4; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1, 4-9; Col. 2:13; Titus 3:5).

(e) that the new creation is brought about in a manner above comprehension, not by culture, not by character, nor by the will of man, but wholly and solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience by faith in the Gospel (Jn. 1:12, 13, 3:8).

(f) that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith in the finished work and Person of Jesus Christ and newness of life (Rom. 10:8-10; 1 Jn. 5:1-5).

VIII. Of Justification, we believe that the blessing Christ secures to believers is justification and:

(a) that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life on the basis of Christ's righteousness and atonement (Acts 13:39; Isa. 53:11; Rom. 5:1, 9, 8:1).

(b) that it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done or ever will do, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood, His righteousness is imputed to us (Titus 3:5-7; Rom. 4:24, 25, 5:1, 17; Gal. 3:11).

IX. Of the Freeness of Salvation, we believe:

- (a) in God's electing grace (1 Thess. 1:4; Col. 3:12; 1 Pt. 1:2).
- (b) that salvation is freely offered to all by the Gospel (Rom. 10:9-13; Rev. 22:17).
- (c) that it is the immediate duty of all to accept this salvation by whole-hearted, penitent and obedient faith (Jn. 3:15-18; 1 Tim. 1:15; Acts 2:37-41; Rom. 10:8, 9).
- (d) that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the Gospel. A rejection which brings upon man the condemnation of God's wrath (Jn. 3:18, 36; Rom. 1:18, 20, 2:1, 4, 5).

X. Of Repentance and Faith, we believe that repentance and faith:

- (a) are inseparable graces (Mk. 1:15).
- (b) are solemn obligations (Acts 20:21).
- (c) are wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God who convicts the believer of guilt, danger, helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, so that the believer turns to God with unfeigned contrition, and confesses to God his wholehearted faith in the work and person of the Lord Jesus Christ as his all sufficient Savior (Acts 2:27, 28; Rom. 10:9-13).

XI. Of Sanctification, we believe this is the process by which, according to the will of God, the believer is set apart from sin, unto Christ, and has three aspects:

- (a) the believer has been set apart positionally before God the moment he believes (1 Cor. 1:30, 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 10:10, 14).
- (b) the believer is being set apart progressively in his walk day by day as he grows in grace toward the likeness of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit in the continual use of the appointed means, especially the Word of God, self-examination, watchfulness, prayer and yielding to the Spirit through biblical change (Jn. 17:17; Rom. 8:13; 2 Pt. 3:18; Rom. 8:28, 29a; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 4:7b; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Jn. 3:3; Rom. 12:1, 2; Eph. 4:22, 24).
- (c) the believer is to be set apart prospectively from the very presence of sin when his sanctification is completed at the coming of Christ for the church (1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Thess. 3:13, 5:23).

XII. Of the Security of the Believer or Perseverance of the Saints, we believe is the design of God's Divine Plan:

- (a) that every person, immediately upon acceptance of Christ as personal Savior and Lord receives eternal life and is made at once a Son of God (1 Jn. 5:11-13; Jn. 1:12).
- (b) that believers are kept by the power of God through faith, are kept in a state of grace, and are eternally secure apart from any human works (Jn. 6:36-40; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:1, 38-39; 1 Cor. 1:4-8; 1 Pt. 1:5).
- (c) that such only are believers who endure to the end (Phil. 1:6; Jn. 8:31; Rev. 21:7, 8; Eph. 2:10).
- (d) that the believers' persevering attachment to Christ and His own and their growth in the likeness of Christ are God's marks which distinguish them from superficial professors (Rom. 8:28, 29a; Jn. 14:21-23; Jn. 10:27-29; 1 Jn. 2:19; 5:1-3; Jn. 13:34, 35; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:11-13; Js. 2:14-20).

XIII. Of the Church, we believe:

- (a) that the church universal is a New Testament institution, established by Jesus Christ, who is its sole Head; revealed through the apostles; empowered and perpetuated by the Holy Spirit; His “Body” for service and His “Bride” for glory. It began with the New Testament saints at Pentecost and will be consummated at the coming of Christ in the rapture (Matt. 16:18; Acts 1:8, 2:1-13, 41-47, 15:14; Eph. 1:22, 23, 3:21, 5:23-32; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).
- (b) that the Church Universal is manifested through the local church which is:
- (1) a congregation of baptized (by immersion) believers, associated together by a covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel (Acts 2:41, 42).
 - (2) observing the ordinances of Christ. (1 Cor. 11:2).
 - (3) governed by His law (Eph. 1:22, 23).
 - (4) exercising the gifts, responsibilities and privileges invested in them by His work (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12:4, 8:11).
- (c) that its scriptural offices are those of elders, (pastors, bishops), and deacons whose qualifications, claims, and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. (Acts 14:23, 6:5, 6, 15:23, 20:17-28; 1 Pt. 5:1-4; 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 8-13).
- (d) the true mission of the church is expressed in the New Testament and abbreviated in (Mt. 28:19, 20; Eph. 4:11-16).
- ...To make individual disciples.
 - ...To baptize them into a properly organized and functioning local church.
 - ...To teach them to obey His Word as He has commanded. This includes assisting parents in teaching truth.
- (e) that the local church has the absolute right of self-government, free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only superintendent is Christ, through the Holy Spirit’s direction by the Word (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23, 24; 1 Pt. 5:1-4).
- (f) that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel and that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation (Acts 15:22; Jude 2, 3; 2 Cor. 8:23, 24; 1 Cor. 16:1-3).
- (g) that on all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, and of benevolence, the will of the local church following the Word of God is final (Mal. 3:10; Lev. 27:32; 1 Cor. 5:11-13).

XIV. Of the Ordinances, we believe:

- (a) that Christian baptism is:
- (1) the immersion in water of a believer (Acts 8:36-39; Mt. 3:6; Jn. 3:23; Rom. 6:4, 5; Matt. 3:16).
 - (2) in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19).
 - (3) to show forth in a solemn testimony and picture of our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Rom. 6:3, 5; Col. 2:12).

(b) that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of our Lord's death until He comes, by the sacred use of broken bread and the freshly pressed juice of the vine as symbols of the price He paid for us. This commemoration should be preceded always by solemn self-examination (1 Cor. 11:23-28).

XV. Of the Righteous and the Wicked, we believe that:

(a) there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked (Gal. 3:22, 26; Gen. 18:23; Rom. 6:17, 18; 1 Pt. 4:18; Prov. 11:31).

(b) such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified or set apart by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in their standing before God (Rom. 1:17; 1 Cor. 15:22; Jn. 5:24; Rom. 3:22-24, 4:22-24; Eph. 1:6, 7).

(c) all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked, and are under the curse (1 Jn. 5:19; Gal. 3:10; Rom. 6:23, 7:5).

(d) this distinction holds among men both before and after death, in the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost (Matt. 25:34, 41, 46; Lk. 9:26, 16:25, 26; Jn. 8:21; Rom. 6:23; Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:10-15).

XVI. Of Civil Government, we believe:

(a) that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society (Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-24; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pt. 2:13,14; 2 Sam. 23:3; Ex. 18:21, 22).

(b) that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed (Mt. 22:21; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2; Titus 3:1; 1 Pt. 2:13, 14, 17; Dan. 1:8-15) except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:19, 20, 5:29; Dan. 3:17, 18, 6:10, 11) who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming Prince of the Kings of the earth. In this connection we stand firmly for the separation of the Church and State (Mt. 10:28, 22:21, 23:10; Rev. 11:16; Phil. 2:10, 11; Ps.72:11).

XVII. Of the Family, we believe:

(a) that marriage of a man to a woman is the plan of God and sacred and the only legitimate marriage in His sight (Gen. 2:18-25; Mt. 19:3-9; Eph. 5:18-32; 1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12; Mal. 2:13, 14).

(b) that the roles of husband, wife, parent, and child are clearly defined in Scripture (Eph. 5:21-32; Col. 3:16-21; 1 Pt. 3:1-7), that they are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate functions for men and women in the home and church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders and elders of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12). We also believe that marriage pictures Christ's relationship to His Bride, the church, and that marriage is permanent, broken only the death of a spouse (Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:39).

(c) that the sexual relationship is sacred and fulfilling only within the bonds of marriage, and is condemned outside the marriage relationship. Any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex (Gen. 2:24; 19:5,13; 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4 1 Cor. 7:3, 4; Heb. 13:4).

- (d) that children are a blessing of God and the responsibility for them rests solely upon the parents and they are to be brought up in loving structured control and conscientious instruction in the truths of God and His principles of life (Ps. 127:3; Eph. 6:4; Deut. 6:6, 7; Ps. 78:4-7; Prov. 22:6; Prov. 17:6).
- (e) of the sacredness of life: 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. We therefore reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the mental well-being of the mother are acceptable (Job 3:16; Ps. 51:5; 139:14-16; Isa. 44:24; 49:1,5; Jer. 1:5; 20:15-18; Lk. 1:44).

XVIII. Of the Resurrection, Return of Christ, and Related Events, we believe in and accept the sacred Scriptures upon these subjects at their full and face value.

These beliefs include:

- (a) Christ's bodily resurrection from the tomb (Mt. 28:6, 7; Lk. 24:39; John 20:27; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:2-6; Acts 2:24, 32, 3:15, 4:2; Rom. 4:25).
- (b) His ascension to the Father's right hand (Acts 1:9, 11; Lk. 24:51; Mk. 16:19; Heb. 10:12).
- (c) His present high priesthood (Heb. 4:14-16; Heb. 7:24, 25, 8:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Jn. 2:1).
- (d) His future appearing in the air to receive His saints (1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:28).
- (e) the resurrection of the righteous dead (1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 15:52).
- (f) the physical change of the living in Christ (1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:17; Phil. 3:20, 21).
- (g) the believer's response to God's Word will be evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ for reward or loss (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; Rom. 14:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:2).
- (h) the White Throne Judgment of the unsaved, and the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 20:11-15, 21:1,2).

XVIV. Of Lawsuits between believers we believe that:

- (a) Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes.
- (b) that the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members.
- (c) 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 (1Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 4:31,32).

The 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 forgoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teachings of the Bible, and therefore, is binding upon all members.