

# CONSTITUTION OF GRACE CHAPEL CHURCH

## Article I – Name

The name of the corporation shall be Grace Chapel Church. It is an Ohio nonprofit religious Corporation with its principal offices in West Liberty, Ohio.

## Article II – Purpose

## Article III – Declaration of Faith

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## Article IV – Government

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18), which He lovingly leads as the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4). The privilege of oversight and the position of authority at Grace Chapel Church has been entrusted, by the Holy Spirit, to the Elders (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17), a plurality of men who are committed to lead the church while pursuing the unity and cooperation of the members of the fellowship (Acts 15).

## Article V – Officers

### A. Elders

The plurality of men who occupy the office of Elder are given five titles, each of which describes their ministry: Elder, with respect to his wisdom and maturity (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 5, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17, 18; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1); Overseer, with regard to his management and guardianship (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2); Pastor, in relation to his provision and protection (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2); Ruler, in connection with his leadership and servanthood (Luke 22:26; Acts 15:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24); and Leader in light of his headship and care for the flock (Romans 12:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17; cf. Acts 27:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Timothy 5:17).

#### 1. Qualifications of Elders

Any man who aspires to the office of Elder must possess the necessary character prerequisites mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-4, listed below:

- a. He must be a male Christian who has clearly trusted Christ as Savior and follows Him as Lord;
- b. He must aspire to the office with passion and motivation;
- c. He must desire the work, to which he will devote his time;

- d. He must live above reproach, in consistent patterns of righteousness;
- e. He must be faithfully devoted to his one wife if married, not having experienced an unbiblical divorce;
- f. He must be temperate, living in moderation and self-control, so that he is a clear-headed, sober leader;
- g. He must be prudent, using Scriptural wisdom in the face of difficulties, avoiding unnecessarily offensive attitudes and behavior;
- h. He must be respectable, disciplining his life according to well-ordered priorities.
- i. He must be hospitable, loving strangers by extending himself to meet the needs of others as a generous host.
- j. He must be able to teach the Bible, convinced of its inerrancy, infallibility, authority, and sufficiency, using it in such a way in ministry that the flock of God can discern and follow the voice of their Shepherd. Thus he is able to exhort believers how to live out truth as well as refute false teachers who contradict the Word of God.
- k. He must not be addicted to wine or any other intoxicating substance that weakens his judgment, demonstrating selflessness in the exercise of his Christian liberties.
- l. He must not be pugnacious, using his fists or intimidation to solve problems, because he is peacemaking, reasonable, and approachable.
- m. He must be gentle, soothing and calming others with his influence so that those who are hurting or straying are healed and restored.
- n. He must be peaceable, refusing to be quarrelsome, and consistently striving for a strong bond of peace that comes from an uncompromising commitment to truth.
- o. He must be free from the love of money, cultivating contentment in his lifestyle, faithfulness in his stewardships, and impartiality towards those who would otherwise entice him with personal financial gain.
- p. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity, consistently maintaining faithful leadership in the home while shepherding in the church.
- q. He must not be a new convert who is immature in the Lord and just beginning to grow, since he will not have the maturity or wisdom required to lead without easily falling into the snares of Satan.
- r. He must have a good testimony with unbelievers, evidencing the transforming power of Jesus Christ in the way he lives before their watchful eyes.
- s. He must be a good steward of Christ's church, having first well-managed his own time, money, body, family, and spiritual gifts.
- t. He must not be self-willed, independently assertive, or arrogantly stubborn, but have the necessary consideration, concern, and care for those under his charge.
- u. He must love what is good, desiring to provide overwhelming care for those he serves in the church, with kindness and eagerness.

- v. He must be just, upholding God’s standards for himself and others without compromise or partiality.
- w. He must be devout, dedicating himself to consistently walk with God through regular Bible study, prayer, confession, worship, etc.
- x. He must serve voluntarily, not begrudgingly or unwillingly.
- y. He must serve not for sordid gain but with eagerness.
- z. He must not use his authority to lord it over the flock, but prove himself an example that compels them to follow.

## 2. Appointment of Elders

Because the precautions in Scripture to “not lay hands on any [Elder] too hastily” (1 Timothy 5:22), the existing leadership shall appoint (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) to the office of Elder all and only such candidates who meet the Biblical criteria, as discerned through the following process:

- a. Recognition (2 Timothy 2:2) – The Elders shall discern those qualified men who already demonstrate the necessary traits for leading the church and determine whether they truly aspire to the office and desire the work of an Elder. Any member of the fellowship is encouraged to recommend another qualified member or himself as a candidate for the office of Elder.
- b. Examination (Titus 1:5-6) – The Elders shall scrutinize any men who aspire to Eldership, evaluating them in the light of the character of their lives, the conviction of their beliefs, and the commitment of their ministries (cf. 1 Timothy 4:16).
- c. Affirmation (1 Corinthians 9:27) – The Elders shall confirm and unanimously agree whether or not a potential Elder matches the Biblical qualifications required to serve, and that there is no known Biblical reason to exclude him from service. If anyone from the congregation or Eldership cannot affirm a candidate for Eldership, he or she must demonstrate that such a man is not qualified on Biblical grounds and handle the matter with the candidate personally and privately (Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1-2; 1 Timothy 5:19-22). If such cases involving an Elder candidate cannot resolved privately and personally, the Elders must investigate and make a final determination (cf. Deuteronomy 19:15-19).
- d. Ordination (1 Timothy 4:14) – The Elders shall install any man that has been recognized, examined, and affirmed as being qualified to serve in the office of Elder, through a public declaration of endorsement, in keeping with the New Testament practice, “the laying on of hands” (cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3-4; 1 Timothy 5:22). This candidate will be appointed to the office of Elder for an indefinite term of service, so long as he remains qualified and desires the work (cf. section 4 below).
- e. Delegation (2 Timothy 2:2) – The Elders shall entrust the newly ordained Elder with the full privileges and responsibilities of the office and work, which he will assume in addition to those specific ministry assignments

that combine his spiritual gifts with the needs of the church (2 Timothy 1:6).

### 3. Responsibilities of Elders

The responsibility of leadership has been entrusted to the Elders of Grace Chapel Church in order to use their God-appointed authority to guide Christ's people into His perfect will, as Christ's undershepherds (Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The only source of their authority is the Scriptures (Titus 2:15).

#### a. Function

1) General – The plurality of Elders share co-equal authority and duty in shepherding the flock (cf. Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1-2), and must be committed to “shepherd all the flock” as a whole (Acts 20:28), as those who will give an account (Hebrews 13:17) for their ministry in the following areas:

- a) Teaching/Preaching (1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:9)
- b) Leading/Ruling (1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17)
- c) Protecting/Guarding (Acts 20:28-31)
- d) Praying/Comforting (James 5:14-16)
- e) Equipping/Entrusting (Ephesians 4:11-16)
- f) Modeling/Mentoring (Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:3)

2) Particular – While every Elder is a part of a team of equals, each Elder may have different roles or specific responsibilities, based on his spiritual giftedness, wisdom from experience, knowledge of Scripture, etc. (Romans 12:4-6; 1 Peter 4:10-11). It is this differentiation of giftedness that allows the church to have two categories of Elders:

#### a) Staff Elders (Compensated)

Scripture identifies that certain “Elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17). While every Elder is responsible for the work of ruling and should be “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2), some men will bear greater responsibility, based on their spiritual gifts, and serve in the office of Elder full-time with financial remuneration, each being “worthy of his wages” (1 Timothy 5:18). In addition, while the preaching and teaching ministry of the church is the responsibility of all Elders, it is principally the equipping ministry of the Teaching Pastor (2 Timothy 4:2; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).

As ministry needs require, additional Staff Elders may be appointed to serve in a full or part-time capacity (Titus 1:5).

b) Lay Elders (Non-compensated)

While Scripture separates those Elders who rule well and labor at preaching and teaching, those Elders who are not financially remunerated for their service shall still benefit from the appreciation, esteem, and love of the congregation, because of their work (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). Together with the Staff Elders, the Lay Elders assist in leading the church with the Scriptures, also serving in ministries suited to their individual spiritual giftedness (1 Peter 4:10-11).

b. Meetings

All regular and special meetings of the Elders shall be determined as the Elders decide is necessary to effectively carry out the work of shepherding, and shall be conducted in the unified, humble, Christ-like attitude of Philippians 2:2-8. Furthermore, the Elders shall make decisions on the principle of unanimity, meaning that every Elder present agrees to support a particular decision (Romans 15:5-6; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3). If unanimity cannot be achieved, the decision will be postponed, modified, or nullified. No Elder shall be purposefully excluded from any Elder meeting against his knowledge or consent.

4. Dismissal of Elders

While Elders are appointed to an office and work of great privilege and responsibility, the Elders also encounter a higher accountability to God's standard (Hebrews 13:17; James 3:1). Thus every Elder is accountable to God and man for the level of his character of life, conviction about truth, and commitment in ministry as described above (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; Acts 24:16). Any leader who refuses to be accountable to the other Elders and the congregation, according to the principles in Matthew 18:15-20 and Galatians 6:1-2, is disqualified from service. Though an Elder may resign his position on the Eldership at any time, he may be removed by the Elders for any of the following reasons:

a. Loss of Scriptural Qualifications

While the Scriptures provide protection for the Elders against baseless and unfounded accusations, it does not provide immunity from Biblical accountability (1 Timothy 5:19-20). Any time an Elder no longer consistently lives according to the pattern of 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4, he is disqualified from service, whether temporarily or

permanently, depending on the severity of the sin – a decision that is subject to the discretion of the Elders. The only accusations which may be welcomed and treated as legitimate are those which have been proven to be true by the testimony of two or three witnesses (v. 19; cf. Matthew 18:15-20), in which case an Elder is disqualified according to 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4. Any Elder who persists in unrepentant sin must bear the same discipline as any member, according to Matthew 18:17 and 1 Timothy 5:20, “rebuke in the presence of all” the congregation. Any removal of an Elder from office shall be made public to the congregation, will take effect immediately, and shall have no appeal to any court (1 Timothy 5:20).

b. Other

An Elder may choose to temporarily step down or be removed from the office of Elder for other reasons, including the following: 1) he needs a temporary sabbatical to rest from the intensity of the work of an Elder in order to concentrate on his personal life or family; 2) he is unable to serve by reason of physical or mental incapacitation; 3) he must attend to pressing needs, such as family illnesses, etc. Any process of reinstatement will be determined by the Elders in relation to the circumstances, his qualification, and his desire to serve again.

B. Deacons

The New Testament office of deacon is distinguished not for its leadership and authority, but for its service and assistance to the Elders and the congregation. The office was instituted originally to enable the spiritual leaders of the church to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-6) and became a recognized, ongoing role for those willing and qualified to serve (1 Timothy 3:8-13). In addition to those men formally recognized as deacons, Scripture also identifies certain qualified women who serve alongside the deacons (1 Timothy 3:11), rendering assistance to the church body as may be appropriate and needed.

1. Qualifications of Deacons

In the same way that Elders must meet certain Biblical criteria, the deacons must “likewise” match the character prerequisites listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, “Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

## 2. Appointment of Deacons

As needed, deacons shall be appointed to their respective offices in the same manner as the Elders, as outlined in Article V, Section 2 (cf. Acts 6:1-6).

## 3. Responsibilities of Deacons

The deacons shall assist the Elders in performing whatever duties are necessary to maintain the care and well being of the church, including physical properties, mercy and benevolence ministries, etc. and are subject to the governing authority of the Elders.

## 4. Dismissal of Deacons

While a deacon may resign his office at any time, he may be removed by the Elders for the following reasons:

### a. Loss of Scriptural Qualifications

Any time a deacon no longer consistently lives according to the pattern of 1 Timothy 3:8-13, he is disqualified from service, whether temporarily or permanently, depending on the severity of the sin – a decision that is subject to the discretion of the Elders. All matters of confrontation and discipline if necessary, must accord with Matthew 18:15-20 and Galatians 6:1-2. Any removal of a deacon from office shall be announced to the congregation, will take effect immediately, and shall have no appeal to any court.

### b. Other

A deacon may choose to temporarily step down or be removed from the office for other reasons, including the following: 1) he needs a temporary sabbatical to rest from the intensity of the work in order to concentrate on personal life or family; 2) he is unable to serve by reason of physical or mental incapacitation; 3) he must attend to pressing needs, such as family illnesses, etc. Any process of reinstatement will be determined by the Elders in relation to the circumstances, his qualification, and his desire to serve again.

## Article VI – Members

### A. Members of the Corporation

The Corporation of Grace Chapel Church belongs to no one, except the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore has no members (Matthew 16:18). However, the

stewardship of caring for Christ's church is primarily the responsibility of the Elders, who shall govern the affairs of the "members of the fellowship."

## B. Members of the Fellowship

Because of the New Testament priority on a Christian's commitment to a local church (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25), Grace Chapel shall have "members of the fellowship" who will directly benefit from the shepherding of the Elders and the mutual care of the other members.

### 1. Eligibility of Members

Anyone who has trusted Christ as Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9-10), and who has confessed Christ through public baptism by immersion (Matthew 29:19-20; Acts 2:41) shall be eligible for membership in the fellowship of Grace Chapel.

### 2. Addition of Members

Any candidate for membership shall appear before the Elders to be examined concerning his or her testimony of faith in Christ, in addition to any other relevant questions that pertain to membership in the fellowship (such as past relationships with other churches, unresolved disputes, agreement with doctrine and practice of Grace Chapel, etc.). Upon unanimous agreement by the Elders, a candidate for membership shall be approved and presented to the congregation for affirmation and dedication (Galatians 2:9; cf. 2 Kings 10:15).

### 3. Duties of Members

- a. Members of the fellowship of Grace Chapel Church, by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10), are expected to strive to live for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:9) in all areas of life, eagerly and joyfully partner with one another in the life of the church (Hebrews 10:24-25) through corporate worship, instruction, prayer, and the exercise of spiritual gifts (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 4:10-11), and faithfully proclaim the Gospel of Christ to those in their spheres of influence (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).
- b. Members of the fellowship are expected to demonstrate support by regularly and sacrificially contributing to the ministries of Grace Chapel with cheerful giving (2 Corinthians 9:1-15) and honoring submission to the leadership of the Elders (1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17).
- c. Absent members shall regularly communicate with the Elders of Grace Chapel so long as they desire to maintain membership in the fellowship.

In the event that a prolonged absence keeps a member from fulfilling the duties above, the Elders may decide to remove that person from membership and privileges of fellowship (Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 John 2:19).

- d. Any person who is a member of the fellowship and has demonstrated provenness in his or her life and ministry may be appointed to an office (1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:22; Titus 1:6).

#### 4. Discipline of Members

- a. The discipline of sinning members was established by Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 18:15-20), for the purpose of 1) restoring a professing Christian to a right relationship with God interrupted by unrepentant sin (Galatians 6:1-2); 2) maintaining the purity of the Body of Christ by removing the permeating influence of wickedness (1 Corinthians 5:1-13); and 3) preserving the reputation of Christ that may otherwise become marred (Romans 2:23-24; 1 Peter 3:15).
- b. The process of church discipline consists of four steps, in accordance with Matthew 18:15-20:
  - 1) Step 1 – Any member of the fellowship entangled in any sin is to be privately approached by the person who first discovered his or her sin, and in a spirit of love, call him or her to repentance and holiness, offering to bear his or her burden as a spiritual help. If repentance is achieved, the process of discipline is over.
  - 2) Step 2 – If however, the member chooses not to repent, the person from Step 1 is to bring one or two others in order to confront the sinning person a second time and call him or her to repentance again. The additional members are called upon to witness the confrontation and confirm or deny that the person accused is indeed sinning and unrepentant. If repentance is achieved, the process of discipline is over.
  - 3) Step 3 – If however, he or she remains unwilling to repent, a fact having been established in Step 2, the Elders shall announce the member's name and sin to the members of the fellowship, who will be asked to pray and call the sinning member to repentance. If repentance is achieved, the sinning member must demonstrate repentance and make public restitution to the Elders and congregation, bringing the process of discipline to an end (2 Corinthians 2:3-11).
  - 4) Step 4 – If however, the member remains unwilling to repent after all three previous steps have been exhausted, the unrepentant member

shall be removed from membership and fellowship from Grace Chapel and treated like an unbeliever. If repentance is achieved at a later time, the repentant person must contact the Elders of Grace Chapel and demonstrate repentance, make public restitution to the church body, bringing the process of discipline to an end, at which time full membership and fellowship may be restored.

- c. In the case of a factious (aggressively divisive) person, Scripture calls for a more aggressive procedure and dismissal than described above, omitting step 3 (Titus 3:10-11).
- d. In cases involving the unrepentant sin of any non-members who regularly attend Grace Chapel, the Elders reserve the right to remove from the fellowship such persons whose destructive influence threatens the doctrine, purity, or unity of the church.

#### 5. Dismissal of Members

A member of the fellowship of Grace Chapel Church may be removed for any of the following reasons:

- a. Transfer (Romans 16:1-2) – Any member in good standing may remove his or her membership at any time by transferring membership to another Gospel-believing church. A member of the fellowship who joins another church immediately ceases to hold membership at Grace Chapel.
- b. Inactivity (Hebrews 10:24-25) – As outlined above, in the event that a prolonged absence keeps a member from fulfilling the duties above, the Elders shall make a reasonable effort to notify him or her. If the absence continues the Elders may remove him or her from membership and privileges of the fellowship.
- c. Discipline (Matthew 18:15-20) – As outlined in the discipline process above, an unrepentant member may be removed from membership in the fellowship by the Elders. Any members of the fellowship in the process of church discipline cannot remove themselves from membership until the discipline is resolved.

#### Article VII – Ministries

The ministries of Grace Chapel shall serve Christ and His church under the careful oversight and authority of the Elders, who will entrust Biblically qualified and gifted members of the fellowship with specific ministries as follows (any compensation for which shall be agreed upon by the unanimous decision of the Elders):

- A. Financial Ministries – consisting of such person(s) as needed to collect, record, and distribute charitable contributions made to Grace Chapel Church, including such roles as treasurer(s) and the auditing ministry, etc. (2 Corinthians 8:10-24).
- B. Administrative Ministries – consisting of such person(s) as needed to facilitate the daily managerial, organizational, and janitorial responsibilities, including such roles as secretaries, custodians, etc. (Acts 6:1-6).
- C. Serving Ministries – consisting of such person(s) as needed to assist in the work of serving Grace Chapel’s fellowship members or regular attendees, including the assimilation ministry of ushers and greeters, hospitality ministry, floral ministry, mission’s ministry, Sunday School ministry, music ministry, etc. (1 Peter 4:10-11).

#### Article VIII – Dissolution

In the event that Christ dissolves Grace Chapel Church (Revelation 2-3), in accordance with Ohio Revised Code, chapter 1702, and upon the full payment of all outstanding obligations, the Elders shall cause all of the remaining assets to be distributed to one or more organizations who are qualified and organized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and whose doctrines and purposes are similar to those of this church.

#### Article IX – Amendments

Any proposed changes to this constitution shall be announced to, explained to, and discussed with the members of the fellowship for the sake of achieving unity, after which this constitution may be altered, amended or repealed, and a new constitution adopted at any time by unanimous decision of all the Elders at the time in office.