

Constitution

ARTICLE I – Doctrine

The Doctrinal basis of this Church is a belief in the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; in the verbal inspiration of the Old and New Testaments in the original manuscripts; in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His substitutional atonement for our sins; that salvation is by grace, through faith in Him who died for our sins, but rose again for our justification; in the bodily resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust; and in the Eternal joy of the saved and the Eternal punishment of the lost; in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to take His Church to be with Himself and to take His great power and reign.

In addition to the foregoing brief Articles of Faith, the following more complete statements of doctrine known as the Niagara Conference Articles of Belief are adopted, to which we also ask the assent of all applicants for membership:

Section I.

We believe that “All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God,” by which we understand the whole of the Book called the Bible; nor do we take the statement in the sense in which it is sometimes foolishly said that works of human genius are inspired, but in the sense that the Holy Ghost gave the very words of the sacred writings to holy men of old; and that His divine inspiration is not different degrees, but extends equally and fully to all parts of these writings, historical, poetical, doctrinal, and prophetic, and to the smallest word, is found in the original manuscripts (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 1 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 2:13; Mark 12:26, 36; 13:11; Acts 1:16, 2:4).

Section II.

We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: And these three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, and worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence and obedience (Mark 12:29; John 1:1-4; Matthew 28: 19, 20; Acts 5:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 1:1-3; Revelation 1:4-6).

Section III.

We believe that man, originally created in the image and after the likeness of God, fell from his high and holy estate by eating the forbidden fruit, and as the consequence of his disobedience the threatened penalty of death was then and there inflicted, so that his moral nature was not only grievously injured by the fall, but he totally lost all spiritual life, becoming dead in trespasses and sins, and subject to the power of the devil (Genesis 1:26, 2:17; John 5:40; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:6; 1 John 3:8).

Section IV.

We believe that this spiritual death, or total corruption of human nature, has been transmitted to the entire race of man, the man Christ Jesus alone excepted; and hence that every child of Adam is born into the world with a nature which not only possesses no spark of Divine life, but is essentially and unchangeable bad, being enmity against God, and incapable by any educational process whatever of subjection to His law. (Genesis 6:5; Psalms 14:1-3; 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:6; Romans 5:12-19; 8:6,7).

Section V.

We believe that, owing to this universal depravity and death in sin, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless born again; and that no degree of reformation however great; no attainment in morality, however high; no culture; however attractive; no humanitarian and philanthropic schemes and societies, however useful; no baptism or other ordinance, however administered, can help the sinner to take even one step toward heaven; but a new nature imparted from above, a new life implanted by the Holy Spirit through the Word, is absolutely essential to salvation (Isaiah 64:6; John 3:5, 18; Galatians 6:15; Philippians 3:4-9; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23).

Section VI.

We believe that our redemption has been accomplished solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin, and made a curse for us, dying in our stead; and that no repentance, no feeling, no faith, no good resolutions, no sincere efforts, no submission to the rules and regulations of any church or of all the churches that have existed since the days of the Apostles, can add in the very least to the value of that precious blood, or to the merit of that finished work, wrought for us by Him who united in His person true and proper divinity with perfect and sinless humanity (Leviticus 17:11; Matthew 26:28; Romans 5:6-9; II Corinthians 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18, 19).

Section VII.

We believe that Christ, in the fullness of the blessings He has secured by His obedience unto death, is received by Faith alone, and that the moment we trust in Him as our Saviour we pass out of death into everlasting life, being justified from all things, accepted before the Father according to the measure of His acceptance, loved as He is loved, and having His place and portion, as linked to Him, and one with Him forever (John 5:24; 17:23; Acts 13:39; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:4-6; 2:3; 1 John 4:17; 5:11, 12).

Section VIII.

We believe that it is the privilege not only of some, but of all who are born again by the Spirit through Faith in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, to be assured of their salvation from the very day they take Him to be their Saviour; and that this assurance is not founded upon any fancied discovery of their own worthiness, but wholly upon the testimony of God in His written

Word, exciting within His children filial love, gratitude, and obedience (Luke 10:20; 12:32; John 6:47; Romans 8:38-39; 2 Corinthians 5:1; 5:6-8; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 John 5:13).

Section IX.

We believe that all the Scriptures, from first to last center about the Lord Jesus Christ, in His person and work, in His first and second coming; and hence that no chapter even of the Old Testament is properly read or understood until it leads to Him, and moreover, that all the scriptures from the first to last, including every chapter even of the Old Testament, were designed for our practical instruction (Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 17:2, 3; 18:23; 26:22, 23; 28:23; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

Section X

We believe the Church is composed of all who are united by the Holy Spirit to the risen and ascended Son of God, that by the same Spirit we are all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles and thus being members one of another, we are responsible to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian prejudices and denominational bigotry, and loving one another with a pure heart fervently (Matthew 16:16-18; Acts 2:32-47; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:20-23; 4:3-10; Colossians 3:14, 15).

Section XI.

We believe that the Holy Spirit, not as an influence, but as a Divine person, the source and power of all acceptable worship and service, is our abiding Comforter and Helper, that He never takes His departure from the Church, nor from the weakest of the saints, but is ever present to testify of Christ, seeking to occupy us with Him, and not with ourselves nor with our experiences (John 7:38, 39; 14:16, 17; 15:26; 16:13, 14; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:9; Philippians 3:3).

Section XII.

We believe that we are called with a Holy calling, to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and so to live in the Spirit that we should not fulfill the lusts of the flesh; but the flesh being still in us to the end of our earthly pilgrimage, needs to be kept constantly in subjection to Christ, or it will surely manifest its presence to the dishonor of His name (Romans 8:12, 13; 13:14; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:23, 24; Colossians 3:1-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Section XIII.

We believe the souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation do at death immediately pass into His presence, and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming, when soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in the glory; but the souls of unbelievers remain after death in conscious misery until for final judgment of the Great White Throne at the close of the Millennium, when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting destruction

from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (Luke 16:19-26; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Jude 6, 7; Revelation 20:11-15).

Section XIV.

We believe that the world will not be converted during the present dispensation, but is fast ripening for judgment, while there will be a fearful apostasy in the professing Christian Body and hence that the Lord Jesus will come in person to introduce the Millennial Age, when Israel shall be restored to their own land, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord; and that this personal and premillennial advent is the blessed hope set before us in the gospel for which we should be constantly looking (Luke 12:35-40; 17:26-30; 18:8; Acts 15:14-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 1:11-15).

ARTICLE II – Membership

Section I – Qualifications for Membership

The True Church is composed of all believers who have been called out from the world, and who are under the dominion and authority of Jesus Christ. (Romans 12:5; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:27). We know that the local Church may become weak and ineffective by receiving members who are not true believers. For this reason, we will attempt, by God's grace to accept no one into formal membership whose name is not already written in the Lamb's Book of Life. (Revelation 20:12-15; 21:27). Any sincere child of God (John 1:12) will be welcomed to membership, regardless of wealth or social position (2 Corinthians 10:17-18; James 2:9) as long as he/she meets the following requirements:

1. A public confession of faith. This could be done in a baptism service if the new member has never yet been baptized. Or it could be done before the Elders or a member of the Pastoral Staff. The goal would be to make sure the candidate had genuinely trusted in Jesus Christ and understood the basis of his salvation (1 Peter 3:15).
2. Agreement with the Church Constitution. The candidate should examine a copy of the constitution so that, in the discussions with a Pastor or Elders, he/she may ask questions concerning any part of our doctrine of government. It is our prayer that each person may be fully informed and in full agreement before joining our fellowship formally.
3. Signing the membership covenant. This covenant commits the new member to submission to the spiritual leaders of Grace Bible Church even to a willingness to receive Church discipline if necessary. (Matthew 18:15-17).
4. Scripture Reading. The candidate will read the following portion of Scripture before he/she is received into the membership of the Church:
 - John 3 and Ephesians 2:1-10 – Understanding the gospel
 - Romans 12 – Commitment to Christ after salvation
 - Ephesians 4-6 – Practicing our faith
 - 2 Timothy 2-4 – Standing firm as a believer
 - Titus 2&3 – Demonstrating good works (not to be saved, but because we are saved.)
 - 1 John 3-5 – Loving the brethren

Section II – Membership Grades

1. Voting Membership – Voting members will be eighteen years of age or older who have met all requirements for membership.
2. Non-voting Membership – Children of members who are under the age of eighteen will be considered members for record keeping purposes assuming they are not living in public rebellion against their parents or the Church; but they must go through the normal process to be received as voting members once they reach voting age if they desire to take part in the formal privileges of membership.

Section III – Duties of the Member

1. To develop and maintain a close personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is our goal that each of our members cultivate the godly habit of spending time daily with God in prayer and the reading of His Word. Out of this personal relationship with God will flow all other attitudes and actions.
2. To practice a total willingness to obey God's Word. A commitment to changing our lives and habit patterns whenever we see that we are not living up to what God tells us to do in His Word is critical to spiritual health. A willingness to constantly be learning new truth and being obedient to it will determine the level of growth and maturity in the life of each Church member.
3. To willingly become involved in the life and ministry of Grace Bible Church. There are two kinds of involvement available. One is primarily a ministry of receiving. The other is a ministry of giving. When we attend meetings and Church functions we receive the spiritual encouragement that is essential to help us stay strong in our commitment to Jesus Christ (Hebrews 3:12, 13; 10:24, 25). We all need to be faithful to assemble regularly. The other obligation each Church member has relates to exercising whatever spiritual abilities God has given him/her for the good of the Church. In order for Grace Bible Church to function as God would have us, each member needs to be doing his/her part to make the ministry run smoothly. It is our desire that each member prayerfully seek God as to what he/she might do to become involved and further the Lord's work. Some tasks are very humble. Others require great skill, but one thing is certain. All are vital and essential (1 Corinthians 12).
4. To promote unity and harmony in the fellowship. We should never gossip or speak evil of one another. We should seek to be problem solvers in the Church, not critics who merely point fingers and identify problems without a commitment to do what we can to make the ministry more effective.
5. To encourage the support of and prayer for our Pastors and Elders. There ought not to be a critical spirit, but an attitude of supportive prayer that God would give them wisdom and strength to lead the flock with godly understanding.
6. To give regularly to the ministry of the Church. In keeping with the Biblical admonition to give to those who minister to your spiritual needs, it is the duty of each member to give to his local Church as his/her first priority (Galatians 6:6). It is our desire that each member practice the method of weekly giving (1 Corinthians 16:2) in order to help maintain the ongoing work of the ministry.

7. To be involved in the task of evangelism. It is the responsibility of every believer in Christ to be involved in the task of reaching others with the gospel. That means using whatever opportunities we have at work, at home, or at school to communicate with others what Christ has done for us. We should demonstrate first through our lives the love of Christ to others, so that we will have an audience when we speak. It is our prayer that every member of Grace Bible Church will be praying for opportunities to share Christ with a world in need of Him.

Section IV – Discipline of the Members

The matter of discipline is entrusted entirely to the Pastor and Elders of the Church. Our scriptural basis for exercising discipline on members of the Church fellowship comes from the following portions of Scripture:

Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). Our motives for exercising discipline will be as follows:

1. To be obedient to Scripture.
2. To restore the erring individual in love.
3. To keep the fellowship pure.
4. To serve as a warning to those of us whose sins are not so public.

Any member of our Church who is involved in public sin or false doctrine may be subject to Church discipline. Each situation must be prayerfully investigated by the Elders. When a sin is considered grave enough, it will be handled according to the passages listed above, but only after the individual has refused all private attempts to reconcile him/her first (Matthew 18). There may be instances when someone who is a part of our Church fellowship but never became an official Church member finds himself/herself under discipline. This is because the New Testament doesn't define Church membership other than those belonging to the Body of Christ. Therefore, anyone who claims to be a believer and identifies with Grace Bible Church may be subject to discipline. However, these cases should be rare and will occur only after a prayerful decision by the Elders. The criteria for making this decision will be relative to the individual's impact on the fellowship. Questions like:

How long has this individual been attending Grace Bible, and to what degree of involvement?

How well known is he/she and how well known is the sin in which he/she is involved

Section V – Inactive members

Any member who is absent for a period of nine months, and fails to communicate with the Church office during that time, may be placed on an inactive list of membership. If more time lapses, the member's name may be removed from the Church roll entirely as the office staff sees fit.

ARTICLE III – Government

The government of this Church is vested in the Body of believers of which this Church is composed. This Church acknowledges only the Lord Jesus Christ as its Head; the Holy Scriptures as the only infallible guide in matters of faith, discipline, and order; the Holy Spirit as its Teacher; and is not and never will be under the jurisdiction or supervision of any other Church or denominational Body whatsoever.

Section I – Officers

The officers of this Church will consist of the Pastor, Board of Elders, Board of Deacons, Secretary, Treasurer and any other officers the Church sees fit to appoint.

1. The Pastor – A Pastor will be called upon recommendation of the Board of Elders, by a two-thirds majority of the voters present at a business meeting of the Church membership. (The purpose of this meeting should be announced two Sundays preceding the meeting. Only one candidate will be recommended for consideration by the Church at one time. If either the Pastor or the Congregation desires to dissolve the pastoral relationship, at least thirty days notice will be given the other party.
2. The Elders – The number of Elders will be set by the Board of Elders themselves. The criteria for the number will be:
 - a. The number of constituents in the Church. The greater the number, the greater the number of Elders ideally.
 - b. The number of men who meet the spiritual qualifications. No matter how large the congregation, only those qualified should be given the position of Elder. Elders will be chosen by the Church for a term of two years on a rotating basis, so that the terms of approximately one-half of the members of the Board will expire each year. An Elder may serve for an indefinite number of consecutive terms as long as the following conditions exist:
 - a. He is willing
 - b. He is able
 - c. He secures the approval of the Pastor and Elders at the expiration of each term.
 - d. He secures the approval of the congregation at the expiration of each term.
3. The Deacons – The term of office, manner of selection, and length of service will be the same as for the Board of Elders.
4. Other offices – The Secretary, Treasurer, and any other ministry heads will be appointed as the Elders see fit.
5. No member will be a member of both boards at the same time.

Section II – Nomination of Officers

The Pastor and Elders will prepare a list of nominations in the following manner:

1. The Church will make available to each voting member a list of the present officers and the positions that need to be filled. Along with this list will be another list of the names of

active members from which they can nominate individuals for office. The members must return their nominations to the office by the announced time. (Before the Pastor and Elders meet for the purpose of formulating the slate. Failure of any member to send in a list of nominations will not make the election invalid.)

2. These nominations will be reviewed by the Pastor and Elders as they meet to recommend candidates for all offices to be approved at the annual election.
3. Congregational approval of all officers will be secured at the annual meeting by secret ballot. A majority of votes cast will be required for election. In all meetings, the Church membership present will constitute a quorum, providing the meeting has been called according to the laws of the Church.

Section III – Qualifications of Officers

1. No one will be selected to fill any office or hold any long term position as a Teacher until he has been a member of this Church for at least three months. The only exception being that special permission could be granted in the case of a Teacher by the Elders.
2. If a question is raised concerning the competence of a present Officer or Teacher, the matter will be settled by the Elders.
3. If any officer of the Church is absent from three regular meetings which are his duty to attend without presenting reasonable cause, his name will be removed from that office and a successor will be appointed in the manner described in Article III, Section V.
4. We would desire that the following Biblical qualifications be used in helping us select spiritual leadership. The passage has been taken from 1 Timothy 3:1-13. (Titus 1:5-9 is a parallel passage that offers further help). Brief explanations have been included to help clarify the meanings of these qualification. These explanations are not meant to be exhaustive, but are designed to help stimulate thought in the process of selecting leadership.

For further understanding, look up and study Titus 1:5-9

Section IV – Duties of Officers

1. Pastor – It will be the duty of the Pastor to preach and teach the Word of God, administer the ordinances, and perform any other duties incumbent to his office. He will be an ex-officia member of all boards and committees.
2. Pastoral Staff – As the Lord supplies numeric growth, full time or part-time, supported staff members will be hired to serve in a pastoral role. These men will serve as additional Elders for as long as they hold their position. They will be required to demonstrate the qualifications of an Elder and attend meetings of the Elders.
3. Elders – It will be the duty of the Elders to oversee the spiritual direction of the ministry and to serve in the following capacities:
 - a. to share the responsibility of the ministry with the Pastoral Staff in the leading the flock by example.
 - b. to exercise Church discipline with the view toward restoration.
 - c. to see that the sick and other needy individuals in the Church are ministered to.
 - d. to administer and distribute the Fellowship Fund.

- e. to be responsible for securing a Pastor on an interim or permanent basis and recommending to the Church changes in the pastoral relationship.
4. Deacons – It will be the duty of the Deacons to have charge of the property and financial affairs of the Church in accordance with the will of the local Body, subject to the oversight of the Elders. They will supervise the collection and authorize the expenditure of money in the general work of the Church. No debt or expenditure in excess of \$2,500 will be incurred except by vote of the congregation present at a regular or special business meeting. The Deacons will be responsible for the custodial needs and maintenance of the building and have the privilege of hiring custodial help.
5. Secretary – It will be the duty of the Corporate Secretary to keep an accurate record of the proceedings in all congregational business meetings. He will be responsible for receiving and accurately recording all money for current expenses and missions. He will make a report at each congregational business meeting, or when called upon by the Deacons.
6. Treasurer – It will be the duty of the Treasurer to receive from the Secretary all money of the Church and to pay out the same upon authorization of the Deacons. He will keep an accurate account of all receipts and expenditures and present a report at each congregational business meetings or when called upon by the Deacons. He will submit his books for a periodic audit in such a manner as may be directed by the Deacons.
7. Trustees – For legal purpose, three men will be appointed to serve as corporate trustees required by the State of Florida. They will be the Pastor, the Treasurer, and the Secretary.

Section V – Vacancies

Should any office become vacant before the expiration of a term, a successor will be appointed by the Elders. The term of such appointment will be only until the next election, at which time he may be appointed to fulfill the unexpired term.

Section VI – Meetings and Order

1. Grace Bible Church will hold corporate worship on Sundays, the first day of the week in accordance with the example set by the early Church. All other meetings whether for the whole congregation or smaller group meetings will be held subject to approval by the Elders.
2. Congregational business meetings will be held on a semi-annual basis during the months of January and July. It is the desire of the Elders to encourage every member of the congregation to make a concerted effort to attend these two meetings each year. The annual meeting will take place in January and provide the opportunity for the congregational approval of officers. (The terms of office will begin the first of February). Annual reports will also be provided at this meeting.
3. The Lord's supper will be observed on a monthly basis. The ordinance will be offered on the first Sunday of each month, in either the morning or evening service, or at such other times as the Pastor and Elders see fit. This is not meant to limit the frequency of observing the Lord's supper, but to establish some pattern for consistency.

4. Special congregational business meetings may be called by the Elders as the need arises. Notice and purpose for such meetings must be given at two regular church meetings preceding the day appointed.
5. The Fiscal year of the Church will begin on the first Sunday of January.
6. In all congregational business meetings, the members present will constitute a quorum, providing such a meeting has been called according to the laws of the Church.
7. Organizational principles will be used to conduct congregational business meetings in an orderly fashion. Parliamentary procedure similar to those reflected in Roberts Rules of Order will be utilized during these business meetings. All congregational business meetings will be conducted by the Chairman of the Elders or, in his absence, the Pastor.

Section VII – Ordination

1. Since it is our hope that Spirit-filled men will be called out from among us to proclaim the Gospel of the Grace of God, such men may be given a commission to preach and perform all duties of the ministry by the recommendation of an ordination council approved by the Pastor and Elders. The ordination will take place one week after the examination, provided that the candidate has the suitable gifts and holds the proper doctrine; and provided that he has proven himself through a period of public ministry.
2. It is our desire that the candidate be ready to embark on his ministry, having already received his training, before he seeks ordination.
3. The ordination council will take under advisement any congregational approval or disapproval.

Section VIII – Finances

We believe the Bible teaches that the proper method of financing the Lord's work is by the offerings of consecrated hearts, in systematic proportionate giving of money (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). For this reason, this Church will seek to avoid fund raising projects. This does not prohibit occasional youth projects, provided they are secured by Elder approval.

Section IX – Constitutional Amendments

1. Amendments to this constitution are to be presented to the Chairman of the Elders who will call a special meeting of the Elders. The purpose of this meeting will be to establish that the contents of the proposed amendments in no way conflict with the doctrinal position of the Church and is worthy of presentation to the congregation for their approval.
2. Amendments to this constitution may be adopted by a three-fourths vote of the members present at any congregational business be distributed in written form to the membership at least two weeks prior to the meeting.
3. No part of Article I (on doctrine) will ever be amended or changed in any respect, unless such changes merely serve to clarify the Church's position on any contemporary heresy and are accompanied by Scriptural support.

Section X – Dissolution

In the event of the dissolution of this Church, the assets of the corporation will be transferred to a religious organization of like faith and doctrine; exempt under C-3 of the 1954 Int. Rev. Code and in accordance with the laws of the State of Florida.