

# Book of Church Order

*This Book of Church Order (BCO) supplements and amends our bylaws. The intention of this BCO is to detail how the ministry of this church is to be organized and governed.*

**APPROVED FEBRUARY 7, 2016**



GRACE CHURCH

knowing Jesus and making Him known



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# USE OF TERMS

## Bylaws

The term “Bylaws” is used to refer to the structural and operational rules for the Corporation, as required by the State of California, and any subsequent amendments, changes or modifications.

## Church

The term “Church” or “church” is used to reference this specific local church: Grace Church, and includes the definition of “Church” used in Section 1.1 of the Bylaws.

## Congregation

The term “Congregation” is used in reference to the full roster of current, active church members.

## Corporation

The term “Corporation” is used to refer to the legal business entity organized and existing under the laws of the State of California. While the Church may be a separate and distinct entity from the Corporation, the BCO recognizes that the Church also conducts business and/or operations by and through the Corporation, according to California corporate law.

## Council of Elders

The term “Council of Elders” (cf. 1 Tim 4.14) describes the currently serving Elders collectively. The primary leadership of the church shall be vested in the Council of Elders, being responsible to oversee the ministry, teaching, membership, operations, and finances of the church. The Council of Elders also constitutes the Directors of the Corporation as set forth in the Bylaws.

## Deacons

The term “Deacons” refers to those who serve the needs of the congregation, under the oversight of the Council of Elders, in matters such as: finances, ministries of mercy, or other areas of church life.

## Elders

The term “Elders” refers to men of commendable character, who serve the Chief Shepherd – Jesus Christ. The Elders are called to “shepherd” (or “pastor”), which involves leading, teaching, and caring for the church on the foundation of the Word, with prayer.

## **Gathered Church / Congregation**

The terms “Gathered Congregation” or “Congregation” are used to refer to the church’s members assembled and meeting for various purposes.

## **Interim Leaders**

The term “Interim Leaders” designates any additional men appointed by the Elders (and affirmed by the Congregation) who serve when there are an insufficient number of elders comprising the Council of Elders.

## **Members**

The term “Members” are those persons who complete the membership process delineated in this BCO, and are admitted to the church by the church’s Elders. Members of the Church are Members of the Corporation, to the extent set forth in this BCO.

## **Membership**

The term “Membership” refers to the current, active Members of the Church collectively. Membership also refers to the Members’ membership in the Corporation with the rights specifically set forth in this BCO.

## **Members’ Meetings**

The term “Members’ Meetings” refers to meetings the church will hold at least bi-annually to conduct specific church and Corporation business with the Membership.

## **Non-staff Elders**

The term “Non-staff Elders” refers to those Elders who do not receive ongoing financial compensation from the church.

## **Staff Elders**

The term “Staff Elders” refers to those Elder who do receive ongoing financial compensation for their labors.

# ARTICLE I.

## Articles of Faith

### Section 1.01 Statement of Vision & Mission

Grace Church exists to glorify God by **knowing Jesus and making him known** through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Our chief aim is to make and grow disciples of Jesus Christ in our church, city and beyond, by proclaiming his gospel, teaching all that Jesus has commanded and worshiping in an environment of gratitude toward God and graciousness toward one another.<sup>1</sup>

### Section 1.02 The Church of God under the Word of God

The church belongs ultimately to God, was purchased by the blood of Jesus<sup>2</sup>, is led by the Holy Spirit, and exists for the glory of God. Jesus Christ is our head; our foundation; our apostle and high priest, our chief shepherd<sup>3</sup>. He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, and has pledged to be with his church always.<sup>4</sup>

As Christ rules over the universal church around the globe and across time, so he rules over particular churches, including this church. Today, Christ rules his church primarily by his Word, through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we submit to the final authority of the Bible as the Scriptures breathed out by God.<sup>5</sup>

### Section 1.03 Confessional Statement

The church has adopted a core Statement of Faith or “*Confessional Statement*” (Appendix I). The *Confessional Statement* for this church may be amended only by *unanimous vote* of the Council of Elders and by a *two-thirds vote* of the Members of the church.

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1 Matthew 28:16-20

2 Acts 20:28

3 Colossians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Hebrews 3:1, 1 Peter 5:4

4 Matthew 28:20

5 2 Timothy 3:16

## ARTICLE II. Name and Legal Status

### Section 2.01 Legal Name

The name of this church is **Grace Church of North County** (herein named, “church”).

### Section 2.02 Mailing Address / Office

The mailing address of the church is: P. O. Box 27192, San Diego, CA 92198.

The Council of Elders shall have authority to change the mailing address and /or principal office from one location to another. They may also establish other offices at any place or places where the church is qualified under applicable law to conduct its business. The mailing address and / or office location will be published publicly on the church’s website.

### Section 2.03 Non-profit Status

This church is a non-profit corporation under the laws of the state of California so long as such ruling remains valid and applicable to the church in accord with Scripture. The exemption is granted under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3).

### Section 2.04 Dissolution and Mergers

The voluntary dissolution or merger of this church may happen by *unanimous vote* of the Council of Elders and by a *two-thirds vote* of the Members of the church in a previously announced Members’ Meeting (announced with at least fourteen (14) days advance notice) having this purpose in view. A dissolution or merger of the church shall result in a dissolution or merger of the Corporation, together with the distribution of any assets, as set forth herein, pursuant to California law.

In the event of a voluntary dissolution of the church, the net assets of the church shall be distributed to one or more non-profit organizations; the distribution shall be in accordance with a *unanimous vote* of the Council of Elders (as noted above).

In the event of a merger with another church, then the net assets of the church shall be contributed to the surviving entity.

# ARTICLE III.

## Membership

### Section 3.01 Nature of Membership

In the New Testament, individual believers join together as members of a particular body,<sup>1</sup> as sheep in a particular flock,<sup>2</sup> and as stones that construct God’s dwelling place.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, this church values and formally recognizes membership in this church body. Membership includes Members’ involvement in the business of the Corporation, as set forth herein.

### Section 3.02 Requirements of Membership

The following represents the *requirements* to join as a member of this church and to remain as a member in good standing:

1. A credible profession of saving faith in Jesus Christ <sup>4</sup>
2. Be in substantial agreement (i.e., not divisive over differences) with our “*Confessional Statement*” (Appendix I)<sup>5</sup>.
3. Be baptized, if not already baptized, as expression of faith in Jesus (or be baptized at next available opportunity).<sup>6</sup>
4. Gather regularly with this body by attending the Sunday service.<sup>7</sup>
5. Be willing to receive spiritual care from the elders, and be able to affirm the overall leadership of the elders.<sup>8</sup>
6. Complete the membership process as stipulated by the Council of Elders and signing the “Membership Agreement” (Appendix II). The elders may ask for permission to inquire with a prospective member’s previous church about how they left that church.
  - NOTE: the Membership agreement includes concurring with our *Statement on Church Discipline* (Appendix III) and our *Statement on Divorce and Remarriage* (Appendix IV).

In sum, members are expected to pursue a life “worthy of the gospel of Christ”<sup>1</sup> as they submit to the teaching of Scripture. Such conduct includes the Spirit-empowered pursuit of personal holiness, relational harmony, church unity, and biblical fidelity.

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1 Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12ff.; Ephesians 4:12-16

2 Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5

3 1 Peter 2:4-5

4 Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13

5 By “substantial” agreement it is meant full agreement on all cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, but some lesser disagreements with the Confessional Statement may be admissible for membership.

6 Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38, Roman 6:1-4

7 Hebrews 10:25

8 Hebrews 13:17

1 Philippians 1:27

The Council of Elders shall approve new members, whose membership shall commence upon approval. Subsequently, the Congregation shall welcome new Members with prayer. The list of Members shall be maintained and available as a *membership directory*.

### Section 3.03 Encouragements to Members

In addition to those requirements for membership, we *encourage* further expressions of biblical Christianity as one participates in the life and ministry of this church - including:

1. Pray for the church and it's ministry <sup>6</sup>
2. Find places of regular service in and through the church <sup>7</sup>
3. Pursue expressions of community, particularly in one of our home groups <sup>8</sup>
4. Give financially, as one is able, to the gospel ministry of this church <sup>9</sup>
5. Seek to reach out to one's network of relationships with the gospel of Jesus <sup>10</sup>

### Section 3.04 Role of / Involvement of the Congregation

While the New Testament gives the elders the authority to lead the church<sup>11</sup>, it also pictures real congregational involvement in the affairs of the church.<sup>12</sup> Thus the Congregation will be genuinely involved in the affairs of the church, including through bi-annual Members' Meetings for the purposes of:

- Affirmation of the annual budget and other significant, unplanned expenditures (*typically in a August / September Members' Meeting*)
- Affirmation of those nominated to serve as Elders and Deacons (*typically, though not exclusively, in a February / March Members' Meeting*)

Affirmation of the annual budget may be discerned by the Council of Elders through a variety of means – including: a formal ballot or an informal vote (e.g., showing of hands). The annual budget will be provided to members at least two (2) weeks prior to such a Members' meeting. For the affirmation of new Elders, see Section 4.03. For the affirmation of new Deacons, see Section 5.03.

### Section 3.05 Votes of the Congregation

The Congregation will also be formally involved in certain church decisions by a formal ballot being taken. The below issues will first be approved by the elders (in accordance with the noted sections of this BCO), and then brought to the congregation for a formal vote. Formal congregational votes will then be required for matters including:

- Approval of changes to our *Confessional Statement*

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6 Matthew 6:7-13, Ephesians 6:18-20, Colossians 4:2-4, etc.

7 Ephesians 4:12-13, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Peter 4:10-11, etc.

8 Hebrews 3:12-13, Hebrews 10:24-25, etc.

9 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 2 Corinthians 9:9-15, Galatians 6:6, etc.

10 Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Acts 8:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Peter 3:15-17

11 Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2

12 Matthew 18:17-18, Acts 6:3

- Approval of a merger or the dissolution of the church (see Section 2.04);
- Approval of entering into or ending any formal affiliations (see Section 8.02)
- Approval of changes to our Bylaws or this BCO (see Section 10.01);
- Any other decisions in which the Council of Elders decides to call for a vote of the Congregation.

Subject to the discretion of the Council of Elders, Members must be present to vote. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast. Unless otherwise noted, a passing vote of the Gathered Congregation shall require a simple majority.

### **Section 3.06      Announcement of Members' Meetings**

A minimum of fourteen (14) days advanced notice shall be given for a Members' Meeting or a voting meeting of the Congregation. Provided such notification, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those Members present. However, at their discretion the elders may provide a means for voting for those unable to attend (e.g., those deployed by the military, those unable to attend due to illness, etc.).

For issues involving a formal ballot, pertinent documentation will be provided at least fourteen (14) days in advance.

### **Section 3.07      Removal from Membership**

The Council of Elders, with due process, may terminate a person's membership for any of the following reasons:

- The Member's request to resign from membership;
- Not participating in the fellowship and expectations of church membership for a period of three (3) or more months without understandable reasons;
- Transferring membership to another church (e.g. when moving to another area);
- A decision for removal by the Council of Elders based upon the Church Discipline process (as outlined in Article VI).

NOTE: The church will make every reasonable effort to contact, reach out to, and care for any non-participating members.

# ARTICLE IV.

## Leadership

### Section 4.01 Council of Elders

The primary leadership of the church shall be vested in a Council of Elders.<sup>13</sup> The Council of Elders shall serve as the governing Board of Directors of the Corporation, with each Elder having equal authority. The Council of Elders shall collectively be responsible to oversee the ministry, teaching, membership, operations, and finances of the church.

There shall be at least five (5) Elders comprising the Council of Elders (if there are less than five Elders, see Section 4.06).<sup>14</sup>

### Section 4.02 Qualifications for Elders

To be considered for the office of Elder, a candidate must be a male<sup>2</sup> member in good standing of this church (including all expectations noted in Section 3.02). However, membership may be extended concurrently in some cases (see Section 4.09).

His character and gifts must consistently conform to the qualifications and responsibilities presented in Scripture, especially 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5.

He must be prepared to annually endorse the *Confessional Statement* in its entirety. Should an Elder's settled convictions no longer be in accord with either the *Confessional Statement*, that elder must describe this change in writing to the Council of Elders.

### Section 4.03 Selection of Elders

New Elders shall be identified and installed by the following process:

- The Council of Elders, prayerfully considering God's direction for identifying new Elders, shall regularly evaluate the church's needs and potential candidates (with due process) for eldership to help meet those needs.
  - NOTE: Members may also recommend candidates to the Council of Elders for consideration. An individual may also nominate himself for consideration.
- The Council of Elders shall pursue an interview process of the man (and his wife, if married). The interview process shall include both a character and theological review to confirm his eligibility (see Elder Profile: Appendix V)

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<sup>13</sup> Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2

<sup>14</sup> In setting this number (five minimum Elders) we are seeking to apply principles of wisdom to this issue of what constitutes a healthy, functioning plurality. Biblical principle (e.g., Prov 15.22) and practical experience tell us that, generally speaking, a smaller eldership (two or three Elders) can be much more vulnerable to the effects of internal division and strife, which has significantly adverse effects on the church.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Timothy 3:2 (cf. 1 Timothy 2:12-14), Titus 1:6

- Upon conclusion of the above interview process, the Council of Elders may – by *unanimous vote of the Elders* - propose a man to the Congregation to be considered for the office of Elder.
- After announcing the proposal of an Elder candidate, the Congregation will be invited to pray, consider, and offer feedback about the candidate within a period of no less than twenty-eight (28) days and not more than ninety (90) days. (This period of time may include a context for the Congregation to interact with the elder candidate about doctrinal, personal or practical ministry-related issues.)
- After hearing and considering the perspective of the Congregation, the Council of Elders may nominate the individual to the Congregation by *unanimous vote*
- Members must affirm the proposed elder by a *three-fourths* majority, as shown by a formal balloting process in a Members’ Meeting (per Section 3.04).

If such affirmation of the Congregation is received, at a mutually agreeable time, the Council of Elders shall publicly commission the new Elder through the laying on of hands and prayer. If such affirmation of the Congregation is *not* received, the elders will evaluate congregational concerns before nominating the man again.

The term of service for an Elder shall commence upon his public commissioning, and with his public commissioning he shall be considered an ordained (i.e., publicly installed) and licensed minister of the gospel.

## Section 4.04 Duties of Elders

The men serving as Elders are called to “shepherd” (or “pastor”) God’s church, which involves leading<sup>15</sup>, teaching<sup>16</sup>, and caring for<sup>17</sup> the church on the foundation of the Word, with prayer (see Elder Profile – Appendix V). In addition, Elders may officiate in the duties and functions in accord with their licensing: baptisms, funerals, and weddings for the members of Grace Church.

An Elder of Grace Church may officiate the wedding of a non-member with approval of the Council of Elders. However, an Elder of Grace Church may *only* officiate a wedding between one man and one woman. This is in accord with our beliefs and practices as stated in our *Confessional Statement* (Appendix I.)

## Section 4.05 Lead Elder / Pastor

The Council of Elders may appoint by *unanimous vote* a Lead Elder / Pastor (assuming previous affirmation by the Congregation to serve as an Elder, Section 4.03) who shall provide leadership, under the oversight of the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders may remove a man as Lead Pastor by a *three-fourths vote* (not inclusive of the Lead Pastor).

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15 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 1 Timothy 5:17

16 Ephesians 4:11ff., 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:2

17 1 Peter 5:1-5; James 5:13-15

A Lead Elder shall be one of the Elders, but tasked with *initiative* in proposing direction for the church and with *oversight of the implementation* of the church's direction as determined by the Council of Elders. He shall also provide leadership to other Staff Elders.

## Section 4.06 Use of an Interim Leadership Team

If fewer than five (5) Elders are commissioned at any given time, Interim Leaders shall be established to carry out the leadership role of the Council of Elders until at least five (5) Elders are commissioned to serve on the Council of Elders. The total number of Elders and Interim Leaders shall be no less than five (5).

Interim Leaders (who are not Elders) are to be considered as assisting the Elders in the Elders' shepherding task. Thus, each member of the Interim Leaders will lend their voice with the Elders on all matters of corporate governance.

Interim Leaders (who are not Elders) shall be male since they are being called upon to help fulfill the leadership role of the Council of Elders. They must be members in good standing and deemed to meet the requirements in Scripture for a deacon (1 Tim 3.8-13). They shall be nominated by members of the Congregation and *unanimously* approved by the current Elders.

The term of service for individual Interim Leaders shall be determined by the Council of Elders. When five (5) or more Elders are commissioned to serve on the "Council of Elders", the Interim Leaders will be released from the council of Elders.

## Section 4.07 Advisory Roles and Committees

The Elders may create advisory roles or committees (on a standing or ad hoc basis), and the members of any advisory committee can be both male and female.<sup>18</sup> Precisely how the Elders pursue such advice is left to the discretion of those Elders. The authority of any advisory committee shall be submitted to the overseeing authority of the Council of Elders.

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<sup>18</sup> This is in accordance with Gen 1.27 ("So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them"). We whole-heartedly affirm the absolute equality in value and dignity between men and women, being both created in the image and likeness of God. We value the wisdom and counsel of both male members and female members of this church.

## Section 4.08 Other Roles and Committees

The Council of Elders may appoint specific jobs, tasks, or responsibilities to individual Elders. In addition, the Council of Elders may appoint two or more persons to serve as a special or standing committee, as the Council of Elders deems necessary. The authority of any committee shall be submitted to the overseeing authority of the Council of Elders.

## Section 4.09 Pastoral Positions on Staff

Within the financial guidelines of Sections 7.04, 7.05, and 7.06, the Council of Elders may hire pastoral staff. However, the above Elder selection process (Section 4.03) must be followed if the candidate is not already serving as an Elder in the church.

In some cases, the Council of Elders may choose to formally nominate a man from outside this church to serve as a Staff Elder (e.g., hiring a Lead Pastor from outside this church). However, he must receive a *three-fourths* vote of affirmation of the Congregation (in keeping with Section 4.03). In such a case, the candidate may be welcomed into Membership at the same time he is commissioned as a Staff Elder.

## Section 4.10 Staff Elder Compensation

Staff Elders are ineligible to determine their own compensation and benefits. Instead, a committee of at least three (3) Non-Staff Elders (or “Interim Leaders,” or “Finance Committee” members) will perform the following related duties:

- Review and approve the job descriptions of each Staff Elder
- Perform and / or review the annual performance review for each Staff Elder
- Set salaries and approve all benefits for all Staff Elders

## Section 4.11 Elder Term of Service

Non-staff elders shall serve three-year (3-year) terms, commencing the month of their public commissioning. However, a Non-Staff Elder, may be removed from office prior to the end of his three-year term by a *three-fourths* vote of the Elders (Section 4.13).

As the three-year term ends for a Non-Staff Elder, by *unanimous* recommendation of the Council of Elders a Non-Staff Elder may be nominated to serve another three-year term. A vote of the *three-fourths* of the Gathered Congregation is needed for a Non-Staff Elder’s continued service. Should such congregational affirmation be received, that Elder’s commissioning shall be extended for another three-year term. There is no limit to the number of consecutive terms a Non-Staff Elder may serve.

A Non-Staff Elder may request a sabbatical rest prior to being commissioned for another three-year term.

Staff Elders shall serve an indefinite term of office once commissioned so long as they remain on staff. Staff Elders have additional accountability to the Council of Elders through

annual performance reviews. Staff Elders may be hired by *unanimous vote* of the Council of Elders and fired by a *three-fourths vote* of the Council of Elders (not inclusive of that particular Elder). Sabbaticals for Staff Elders may be approved by the Council of Elders.

If a Staff Elder intends, of his own volition, to transition to serving as a Non-Staff Elder, the Council of Elders may extend his commission as an Elder by up to twelve (12) months before he is nominated to serve a three-year term as a Non-Staff Elder.

An Elder may resign from office at any time by submitting a written letter of resignation to the Council of Elders. Upon formal acceptance, the resignation will be considered effective immediately, or at a mutually agreeable date.

## Section 4.12 Charges Against an Elder

Recognizing their ultimate accountability to the Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>19</sup> each Elder shall be accountable to the Council of Elders and to the Congregation for his life, teaching, and service to the church. In the event that a charge of moral or doctrinal failure is raised against an Elder<sup>20</sup>, the Council of Elders will assume responsibility to investigate all allegations pertaining to church-related matters (i.e., not criminal matters). The first decision will be to determine if the accusation is a charge or a grievance. If three-fourths of the Elder Council agree it is a charge, the following will take place.

If the charges appear credible,<sup>21</sup> and involve moral impropriety, doctrinal error, or any charge that is harmful to the witness of the Gospel and the church, the Council of Elders shall take the following steps:

- The Council of Elders shall form a Task Force of at least three (3) individuals who may be Elders and/or other Members to further investigate the charge(s).
- During the investigation, the Elder in question shall not be allowed to vote as an Elder and he shall be placed on temporary leave (with pay in cases of Staff Elders).
- The Task Force shall bring the results of its investigation to the Council of Elders in a timely fashion (i.e., within thirty (30) days unless otherwise agreed upon) who, after providing the accused Elder with an opportunity to speak for himself, shall make a determination of the guilt or innocence of the accused Elder according to the criteria of Scripture, without showing partiality.<sup>22</sup>
- A *three-fourths vote* of the Council of Elders (not inclusive of the Elder being charged) shall be necessary in order to find an Elder guilty of charges.
- If the accused Elder is found guilty of the charges brought against him, the consequences for such a finding shall be determined by the Council of Elders. Any action, up to and including immediate removal from office, shall require a *three-*

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<sup>19</sup> Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:4; cf. 1 Timothy 5:19-21.

<sup>20</sup> A distinction is being made in this document between a “charge” and a “grievance”. A charge is more serious in nature as an accusation of some moral or doctrinal failing, one which would likely disqualify that individual from continued service as an Elder. A grievance will likely be akin to an unresolved conflict or unheeded concern of some significance.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Timothy 5:19

<sup>22</sup> James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:19-21

*fourths* vote of the Elders. If the guilty Elder is removed from office, the Council of Elders shall publicly rebuke him before the Gathered Congregation.<sup>23</sup>

- If the accused Elder is found not guilty of the charges brought or the matter is inconclusive (with no more than one dissenting vote), the Elder's temporary leave shall end and he shall be fully restored to ministry, including his voting rights as an elder. The Council of Elders shall determine what communication, if any, needs to be made to the Congregation.
- If fifty percent or more Elders find the accused Elder guilty of charges, but fewer than three fourths of the Elders find him guilty, a committee of at least six (6) mutually-agreed upon members of Grace Church (who are not Elders, Interim Leaders, or Task Force members) and / or mutually agreed upon Elders from a like-minded church, shall be formed to weigh the charges. This committee shall be informed of the charges and the necessary details. After providing an opportunity for the accused Elder to speak for himself, the committee shall vote on whether the leader shall be removed from office. With a *two-thirds* vote of the committee, the accused Elder shall be found guilty, and he shall be immediately removed from his office.

#### **Section 4.13 Removing an Elder for Non-Disciplinary Reasons**

An Elder's service may be terminated by dismissal for non-disciplinary reasons (e.g. no longer being able to carry out his responsibilities, or a change in church needs) by a *three-fourths* vote of the Council of Elders (not inclusive of that particular Elder), effective immediately or at a mutually agreeable time.

#### **Section 4.14 Meetings of the Council of Elders**

Generally, the Council of Elders shall meet once or twice per month at a scheduled time to conduct business; as they deem necessary. The Elders may have additional meetings.

#### **Section 4.15 Quorum and Passing Vote in the Council of Elders**

A quorum is defined as a majority of the Elders. A quorum is required for all voting matters.

Unless otherwise determined in this Book of Church Order, other written policies, or by other agreements, a passing vote shall require a simple *majority* of votes cast in order to make a decision within the Council of Elders.

In order to make a decision requiring a two-thirds majority, three-fourths majority, or unanimity in the Council of Elders, the decision will require the presence or consent to vote of all Elders. In all matters directly pertaining to an Elder's role, such as nomination for his

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<sup>23</sup> I Timothy 5:20

next term of office, or decisions pertaining to an accusation against him, that Elder shall be recused from voting.

In making decisions the Council of Elders should strive for consensus. In addition those elders who cast dissenting votes should strive to support the decisions of the Council.

## ARTICLE V.

### Deacons and Other Leaders

#### Section 5.01 Purpose of Deacons

Deacons, under the oversight of the Council of Elders, shall administrate service—whether in financial matters, ministries of mercy, or other areas of service in church life. Deacons do not have any special governing authority in the church, and are submitted to the oversight of the Council of Elders.

There is no minimum or maximum number of Deacons to be commissioned. The number of Deacons and the job description of each Deacon may be determined by the Council of Elders in consideration of the gifts and needs of the congregation.

#### Section 5.02 Qualifications of Deacons

A Deacon must be a Member in good standing (including faith in Jesus Christ, subscription to the *Confessional Statement*, and the other expectations noted in Section 3.02) whose life consistently conforms to the qualifications for deacons presented in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

#### Section 5.03 Selection & Confirmation of Deacons

When the Council of Elders believes that God is calling a Member to serve as a Deacon in the near-term future, the Deacon candidate shall be formally approved by a *three-fourths* vote of the Council of Elders.

The Council of Elders will commission a new Deacon publicly through the laying on of hands and prayer.

#### Section 5.04 Tenure of Deacons

The Council of Elders will determine the term of each deacon.

#### Section 5.05 Other Ministry Leaders or Staff Members

Though all church Members are to do “the work of ministry”<sup>24</sup>, the Council of Elders may choose to appoint or recognize ministry leaders for a variety of ministry purposes, and may (with due process) choose to hire some persons for internships or long-term staff positions.

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<sup>24</sup> Ephesians 4:12

Unless otherwise specified, the qualifications for other ministry leaders and staff members shall be consistent with the qualifications noted for Deacons in Section 5.02. On a case-by-case basis, the Council of Elders may choose to license or ordain commissioned leaders (other than Elders) for ministry. The Council of Elders may also eliminate positions.

### **Section 5.06 Resignation or Removal of Deacons, Ministry Leaders, or Staff Members**

A Deacon, ministry leader, or staff member may resign from his or her role by submitting a letter of resignation to the Council of Elders. Upon formal acceptance, the resignation will be considered effective immediately, or at a mutually agreeable date.

The Council of Elders may also decide (through due process) to remove a Deacon, ministry leader, or staff member from his or her position. If a Member feels he or she has been removed without just cause, he or she may seek resolution, in keeping with Article IX.

# ARTICLE VI.

## Discipline of Members

### Section 6.01 Purpose of Discipline

Scripture describes and directs a process of the church disciplining unrepentant members.<sup>25</sup> The primary aim of church discipline is the spiritual restoration of a brother or sister in Christ.<sup>26</sup> (See Appendix III for the *Statement on Church Discipline*.) Church discipline aims to demonstrate:

- Love for the individual, that he or she might be warned and with the aim that he or she would be brought to repentance and restoration (Matt 18:10-17);
- Love for the church, that the purity, health, and strength of the flock might be protected, since “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Gal 5:9);
- Love for the watching world, that it might see Christ’s transforming power, and that our witness would not be hindered, tarnished, or discredited;
- Love for Christ, that His church might uphold his holy name and obey him and so glorify Him.

### Section 6.02 Process of Discipline

In cases of church discipline, the process carried out in a spirit of love (per above) will be:

- A private appeal will be made to the sinning member by one or more Members (this may be a lengthy series of private appeals, depending on the situation).
- If the Member appears unrepentant, the Council of Elders will assume jurisdiction to investigate the charges fairly and impartially – involving other Members as wisdom and prudence dictate, reflecting the widening circles described in Matthew 18:15-17.
- If the process of appeal above has been pursued and the Member continues to be unrepentant, the Elders will inform the Gathered Congregation (in a Members’ Meeting) of necessary details to inform them, and ask them to pray for and appeal to the unrepentant Member (per Matthew 18:17).
- After due investigation, and after due appeals for repentance, if the individual is continuing in unrepentant sin, the Council of Elders will terminate the individual’s membership.

In rare cases of flagrant unrepentant sin (e.g. sins that do obvious harm to Christ’s reputation, sins that may cause harm to other members, or divisive false teachings), the Council of Elders may significantly accelerate the above process.

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:6-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

<sup>26</sup> Galatians 6:1; 2 Corinthians 2:6-11

It is hoped that the above steps would result in repentance on the part of the sinning Member, and full restoration of their membership in Grace Church. However, if repentance is not displayed after these steps are taken, the individual's membership shall be terminated. Such termination of membership shall be decided by the Council of Elders after due consideration and prayer. The reason for termination of membership shall be stated in a pastoral letter delivered to the disciplined person. The Gathered Congregation will also be informed of the conclusion of the discipline process and any necessary details.

### **Section 6.03      Grievances over Discipline**

Should a disciplined member believe that such a process was carried out unjustly, he or she may follow the *Grievance Resolution & Conflict Reconciliation Process* (see Article IX) to have a hearing of their grievances.

# ARTICLE VII.

## Church Financial Stewardship

### Section 7.01 Church Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Church shall be from January 1 through December 31.

### Section 7.02 Financial Steward

To promote financial integrity, the Council of Elders shall by unanimous vote appoint a Financial Steward, who may be a Deacon, Elder, or other Member in good standing of Grace Church with appropriate skills in the area of finance.

### Section 7.03 Duties of the Financial Steward

To guard the financial integrity of the church--since “we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord’s sight, but also in the sight of man” (2 Cor 8:20-21)--the Financial Steward shall be responsible to:

- Oversee the process of formulating an annual budget, in concert with the Council of Elders and other pertinent Members.
- Oversee the keeping of accurate records of all financial transactions and all offerings received (including giving records of individual contributors);
- Oversee the maintenance of adequate insurance coverage for church property;
- Oversee the formulation and enforcement of policies governing the use and care of church property (except equipment supervised by other church ministries);
- Inform the Council of Elders of the financial status of the church on not less than a quarterly basis;
- Oversee the creation and delivery of appropriate reports to the Congregation of the financial status of the church, at least bi-annually in Members’ Meetings.

The Financial Steward may lead a committee or team(s) of members to prudently manage some or all of the above responsibilities.

### Section 7.04 Annual Budget

A budget process shall be overseen by the Financial Steward in preparation for each fiscal year, under the oversight of the Council of Elders, and in communication with pertinent Deacons or other church leaders.

The budget shall be sent to the Congregation at least fourteen (14) days prior to a Members’ Meeting, with the intention of receiving feedback from Members. This proposed budget may be lightly amended within this period in response to feedback.

Members may raise substantive concerns are raised in the Members' Meeting prior to a vote of affirmation.

If there are unresolved budget concerns deemed substantive by the Financial Steward or Council of Elders that arise from the Members' Meeting, the Council of Elders will convene to consider those concerns. They will then adjust the budget as needed, report back to the Members of the church, and invite further feedback. The church shall continue to operate within the limits of the last affirmed budget until a new budget in which all substantive concerns raised by the Congregation are resolved.

### **Section 7.05 Compensation**

The Council of Elders shall decide matters of compensation for all paid staff who are not Elders. This shall be done in conjunction with a Finance Committee (if currently commissioned). Staff Elders shall be recused from decisions regarding compensation for Staff Elders (see Section 4.10 above).

### **Section 7.06 Non-budgeted Financial Decisions**

To spend more than 120% of the total funds previously affirmed in the fiscal year's budget (including major property decisions, or any decisions that would lead the church to take on new or additional financial debt for more than sixty [60] days), the Council of Elders must provide a written proposal for the budget increase at least fourteen (14) days in advance of a vote of a Members Meeting. This written proposal may be lightly amended within the fourteen (14) day period in response to feedback. Approval of the above changes to the budget shall require a *majority* affirmation of the Gathered Congregation. Without such affirmation, the church shall operate within the limits of the last affirmed budget.

### **Section 7.07 Indemnification**

Subject to the provisions regarding prohibited indemnification below, the church shall indemnify any Elder or former Elder of the church against claims, liabilities, expenses, and costs necessarily incurred by him in connection with the defense, compromise, or settlement of any action, suit or proceeding, civil or criminal, in which such person is made a party by reason of being or having been an Elder, to the extent not otherwise compensated, indemnified or reimbursed by insurance, if:

1. The conduct of the Elder was in good faith;
2. The Elder reasonably believed that his conduct was in the best interests of the church, or at least not opposed to its best interests; and
3. In the case of any criminal proceeding, the Elder had no reasonable cause to believe that his conduct was unlawful

## ARTICLE VIII.

### Formal Affiliations

#### Section 8.01 Allowance for Formal Affiliations

Grace Church may enter into a formal affiliation(s) with another church, group of churches, or any other organizing body.

A "formal affiliation" shall be any agreement that formally identifies this church with another Bible-believing, Gospel-preaching church, group of churches, or organizing body through an ongoing monetary commitment, time commitment, or other formally agreed upon commitment.

Such an affiliation must be deemed to serve the vision and mission of this church, as led by its elders, and the greater purposes of God in the gospel of His Son.

By way of distinction, a relational partnership in the gospel - like currently enjoyed with Grace Church-East County - shall not be considered a "formal affiliation" since it places no specific commitments upon this local church or its leadership.

#### Section 8.02 Entering Into or Ending a Formal Affiliation

For Grace Church to enter into any formal affiliation (as described above), the Council of Elders must *unanimously* vote to approve. In addition, a *majority* vote of the Gathered Congregation is also necessary to enter into such an affiliation.

To end a formal affiliation with another church, a group of churches, or any other organizing body, requires at least a *four-fifths* vote of the Council of Elders. Ending a formal affiliation also requires a *majority* vote of the Gathered Congregation.

## **ARTICLE IX.**

### **Resolving Grievances and Reconciling Conflicts**

#### **Section 9.01 Resolving Grievances and Conflicts in the Church**

The Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church.<sup>27</sup> Members shall therefore be asked to make every effort to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblical principles, without reliance on the secular courts. This approach to resolving disputes does not prohibit the involvement of secular authorities with regard to criminal activity or matters that jeopardize the safety of any persons.

In addition, the Elders desire to bring leadership to the church that is open to observations and disagreement. Members of this church should be made to feel at ease and appreciated when they bring a concern to an Elder or leader.

When additional elder participation is needed to help bring resolution and reconciliation, material compiled from Toby Kurth and Peacemakers Ministries will be used.

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<sup>27</sup> Matthew 18:15–20, 1 Corinthians 6:1–8

## **ARTICLE X.**

### **Amendments and Adjustments to Bylaws or BCO**

#### **Section 10.01 Process for Amending Bylaws or BCO**

The Bylaws and the BCO shall be modified, amended and/or supplemented as follows:

1. By a *unanimous* vote of the Council of Elders ; and,
2. By a *majority* vote of the Gathered Congregation, with only one exception: a change of the address of the church's primary office or mailing address in Section 2.02 may be made by decision of the Council of Elders without requiring a vote of the Congregation.

#### **Section 10.02 Governing Documents – Conflicts**

In the event of any conflict between provisions of the Bylaws and the BCO, the provisions of the BCO shall govern and apply in the place and stead of any conflicting provisions in the Bylaws.

## APPENDIX I.

# Confessional Statement

This *Confessional Statement* is an adaptation of the Confessional Statement of “The Gospel Coalition”<sup>28</sup>. However we are wedded to the truths of Scripture, as summarized below, and not to the doctrinal stance of any particular ministry.

1. **The Triune God.** We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.
2. **Revelation.** God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God’s truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God’s revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God’s instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God’s command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God’s pledge, in all that it promises. As God’s people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.
3. **Creation of Humanity.** We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God’s agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ

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28 This statement may be downloaded at: <http://thegospelcoalition.org/about/who>

and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

4. **The Fall.** We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God's own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.
5. **The Plan of God.** We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.
6. **The Gospel.** We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God's very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is Christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is: "Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised"). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).
7. **The Redemption of Christ.** We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the

virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

8. **The Justification of Sinners.** We believe that Christ, by his obedience, death and bodily resurrection, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. By his bodily resurrection, he triumphantly showed himself to be the true basis of our justification, for all who believe. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.
9. **The Power of the Holy Spirit.** We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the other *Paraclete*, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, and in him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service. *The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life and witness, and imparts his supernatural gifts for the edification of the body and for various works of ministry in the world. These gifts should be eagerly desired.*

10. **The Kingdom of God.** We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

11. **God's New People.** We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

12. ***The Nature of Marriage and Sexuality.*** *We believe the term "marriage" has only one meaning, and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that we are all sinners and all prone to sexual sin. However, we also believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and*

*offensive to God. We believe that God offers redemption and full reconciliation to him for all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrines of the church. Gen. 2:24; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-32; 1 Cor. 5:1-2; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23; Mark 10:6-9*

13. **Baptism and the Lord's Supper.** We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself, *and are reserved for professing believers*. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.
  
14. **The Restoration of All Things.** We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

## APPENDIX II.

### Membership Covenant

As a member of Grace Church, I profess that I have believed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, the gift of eternal life, and the gift of the Holy Spirit who empowers us to believe and to live for the glory of God.

Based on our common ground of Jesus and his finished work, I gladly agree to walk in covenant relationship with the members of this church by making the following commitments:

- I am in substantial agreement with the church's "Confessional Statement," and will uphold its major tenets as the fundamental basis of our unity as a church.
- I will seek to live together with my brothers and sisters in love as God has loved us and I will, as God enables me, care for my brothers and sisters in Christ in distress, sickness, and poverty. I will use my gifts for the building up of the body.
- I will pursue conciliation when offense occurs between myself and another member, and I will reject all opportunities to speak or to hear gossip or slander.
- I will encourage and support the sanctification of all members of the church. If a brother or sister requires corporate discipline, I will support the efforts and direction of the church to call that member to repent of his or her sins. I agree with the church's doctrine and practice of church discipline as described in the church's "Statement on Church Discipline."
- I will promote marriage as a reflection of Christ's relationship with his church and bring up any children God gives me in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. I support the church's understanding of the Bible's teaching on divorce and remarriage as described in the church's "Statement on Divorce and Remarriage."
- I will not neglect to meet together regularly for corporate worship with this body in its Sunday services, and will endeavor to participate in home groups and discipleship opportunities.
- I will (if not already baptized) pursue being baptized in water, to obey Jesus' command and to identify publicly with Jesus, at the next available opportunity that this church provides.
- I will willingly receive spiritual care from the elders of this church, and will seek to affirm the overall leadership of the elders.

## APPENDIX III.

### Statement on Church Discipline

Throughout its pages, the Bible sounds a recurring theme: those God loves, he disciplines.<sup>1</sup> That is, he teaches and trains us for our good as he transforms us from within. This is the nature of all biblical, redemptive “discipline”.

Such teaching and training, in the form of God’s discipline, is a sometimes challenging process as God corrects his people’s thoughts, words and behavior so they can fulfill their calling of becoming more and more like him. God disciplines his people through a variety of means. He calls his people first to self-discipline. Each Christian is called to hear the Word of God as he reads the Bible and hears the Bible taught and applied.<sup>2</sup> As he compares his life to God’s Word, he adjusts himself to conform to his Savior by the power of the Holy Spirit.

However, individual interaction with God and his Word is not the only means that God uses to make his children holy; God also intends to use his people. “Brothers,” writes Paul, “if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness....”<sup>3</sup> As members of this local church, we wish to take seriously our responsibility to “restore” members who fail to respond to God’s personal discipline. This means that beginning with private confrontation and, if necessary, leading to public rebuke, we seek to help one another overcome any refusal to repent of those words and actions that the Bible clearly defines as sin.<sup>4</sup> This would apply to areas of sin that could bring harm to oneself or others, as well as reproach to the Lord. It could also include a refusal to turn from heretical doctrine.

Jesus outlined a process for redemptively addressing another believer’s sin in Matthew 18:15-17.<sup>5</sup> As a church, we agree that this is the appropriate way to approach someone who refuses to appropriate God’s grace for change. Initially, such a process should be informal: if a Christian sees a brother or sister sinning in a way that appears to be continual or habitual, he should approach that person personally and inquire about it. If in fact there is unrepentant sin and a refusal to repent, then the concerned brother or sister should involve one or two others, which may include an elder. If this larger group confirms that sin continues without repentance, the process may move to more formal church discipline as the circle of those involved is appropriately expanded. The goal in doing so is always that we might have “gained (our) brother (or sister)” (Matthew 18:15).

When the church begins to formally discipline a member, the church’s elders inquire with the individual member in question to confirm fact and to appeal for change. If change is not forthcoming, the elders will inform the church of the member and his sin, urging members to contact the erring member and appeal for repentance. During this time, the member under discipline may not participate in the Lord’s Supper. In addition, his participation with members should revolve around his need for change. If, after a reasonable period of appeal, no repentance is forthcoming, the elders will inform the church again, this time

announcing that they must revoke membership and that the church must now treat the unrepentant person as they treat unbelievers: in other words, when they interact with this person they should not have “fellowship” as the Bible defines it, but they should appeal for the former member to put his faith in Jesus’ work in the good news of his life, death, and resurrection for their sins.

Church discipline has nothing to do with “shunning” a person. It involves confronting sin in love and with gentleness. Where more formal discipline is needed, this does not comprise the rejection of a relationship but a change in the nature of that relationship. If a person under discipline is not factious or disruptive or a harmful influence, he is welcomed to attend all church meetings that are open to unbelievers. The elders may decide to abbreviate or eliminate the process of appeal for repentance if the sin is especially notorious, or if the member proves to be factious, disruptive, or leading others into sin or error. In these cases, the elders may ask church members to avoid all contact with an individual in order to mitigate his sinful influence.

At times a member may seek to withdraw from the church to avoid church discipline and its consequences. Just as a good shepherd will go after a sheep that has wandered from the flock (Matthew 18:12-14; Ezekiel 34:4,8,16), so shall the elders and members of this church seek to restore a wandering member to the Lord. Therefore, discipline may be instituted or continued either before or after a member seeks to withdraw from membership if the elders determine that such discipline may serve to guard and preserve the honor of God, protect the purity of the church, or restore the wandering member to the Lord. While the church cannot force a withdrawing member to remain in this congregation, the church has the right and the responsibility to encourage restoration, to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, and to make a final determination as to the person’s membership status at the time withdrawal is sought or acknowledged.

If a member leaves the church while he is under the scrutiny of the disciplinary process or while a censure against him is still in effect, and if the elders learn that he is attending another church, they may inform that church’s leadership that the person is currently under church discipline and may ask that church to encourage the accused to repent of his sin and to be restored to the Lord and to any people whom he has offended. Such communications enhance the possibility that a person may finally repent of his sin, and, at the same time, serve to warn the other church to be on guard against possible harm that the accused might do (see Matthew 18:12-14; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:16-18; 4:9, 14-15; 3 John 9-10).

Once the elders make a sin publicly known, they also commit to inform the church of repentance and restoration to fellowship as appropriate to the situation and the good of the church. Again, this is our desire and motive for any disciplinary process. We want and believe the grace of God in Jesus is more than sufficient to restore any person who truly repents of his or her sin.

Christians who attend our church and have been excluded from fellowship from another church will not be allowed to participate in fellowship here unless they repent of their sins and make confession and restitution with their former church or the elders of this church are able to determine that the former church did not apply church discipline according to Scripture.

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1. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (Hebrews 12:5-6 ESV, see also verses 7-13).
2. See John 15:3, 10, 20; John 17:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:11-13.
3. Galatians 6:1 ESV
4. Other New Testament passages (besides Galatians 6:1 and Matthew 18:15-17) that support this practice include: 1 Corinthians 5; Acts: 20:28ff; Galatians 2:11-14; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 3:10-11; Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.
5. If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (ESV).

## APPENDIX IV.

### Statement on Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce is a sad reality in our society and in the church at large. While God has, from the beginning, intended that marriage be lifelong<sup>1</sup> and glorify God by reflecting the relationship of Christ to his church,<sup>2</sup> there are times when our Lord permits a believer to seek a divorce without sinning against God or a spouse. The conditions under which this may happen are only two:

- when a spouse commits sins that involve sexual contact with another person;<sup>3</sup>
- when an unbelieving spouse abandons a marriage.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note that God permits divorce in such cases. Divorce is not required, nor will the church encourage a spouse to divorce when he or she has faith toward God for the marriage to be restored—even when the situations listed above exist.

For the church to condone a divorce in these cases, the spouse must submit the facts of his or her marital situation to the elders to determine before God in Scripture what he would permit. If a spouse who is a member of the church seeks a divorce from another member due to abandonment, he or she must first wait for the church to follow its practice of church discipline to the end of treating the sinning spouse as an unbeliever before divorce may become a biblically allowable option.

Separated spouses awaiting a pending divorce should consider themselves married until the day a civil court declares the divorce final and legally recognized. They should thus conduct themselves in the church as a married person.

If a divorced person becomes a member of the church, he or she should understand that remarriage will only be condoned by the church when the circumstances prior to the divorce, or following after the divorce, fall under the two conditions listed above. If the circumstances of the divorce do not conform to what Scripture deems acceptable, the divorced person should consider before God whether he or she should seek reconciliation with his or her former spouse. He or she should also seek to confess to God and to his or her former spouse any sins committed in the seeking of a divorce that did not comply with the teaching of Scripture.

However, the situations in which people find themselves vary greatly, especially as it relates to divorce and remarriage. If you have questions about how the Bible speaks to your situation, please speak with an elder. We would be happy to discuss your situation and hope with you in the grace of God that can redeem any situation, no matter how painful or challenging.

Lastly, in applying the Bible to situations related to divorce it should also be noted that there are situations in which a spouse finds himself or herself in some physical danger as

they relate to their spouse. We would urge an appropriate physical separation for the protection of a spouse in such a situation, and we would encourage the involvement of the civil authorities whenever or wherever appropriate for that situation. The goal of such a separation should be protection, with the ultimate goal of reconciliation at an appropriate time. However, such a separation for one's physical protection is not in violation of the biblical principles described above.

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1. Matthew 19:4-5; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11
  2. Ephesians 5:22-33
  3. Matthew 5:31-32
  4. 1 Corinthians 7:12-16

# APPENDIX V.

## Elder Profile & Responsibilities

### BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELDERS

A man must first meet the biblical qualifications for elders as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3 in order to qualify for elder nomination. A man meets the biblical qualifications for eldership when his life and character are substantially marked by growing maturity in the categories outlined in Scripture. After being appointed as an elder, a man continues to qualify as an elder as long as his life and character continue to be substantially marked by maturity in these Biblical qualifications for elders.

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. - **1 Timothy 3:1-7**

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. - **Titus 1:5-9**

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. - **1 Peter 5:1-3**

### OTHER CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

We believe the unity of the church is served when the elders share fundamental agreement on our primary guiding principles. We also believe that the above biblical qualifications for elders should evidence themselves in observable ways. Therefore it is important that the following additional criteria be in place for someone nominated to eldership:

1. A man and his wife (if married) must be members in good standing of Grace Church.
2. A man must hold firmly, without qualification, to our “Confessional Statement”.
3. A man must be able to gladly affirm as biblical our “Theological Distinctives”<sup>29</sup>
4. A man must demonstrate active participation in fellowship with other believers in Grace Church (e.g., typically in a Grace Church small group).
5. A man must have an observable ability for and inclination to serve fruitfully in the spiritual care of others (i.e., an ability and inclination to “*shepherd the flock*” – 1 Pet 5.2).
6. A man must support the practice of leadership by a plurality of elders as delineated by our statement of “Polity Convictions & Commitments” (downloadable from our website).

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<sup>29</sup> These distinctives are taught in the Discovering Grace Church course, and include our being baptistic, reformed, and continuationist.

## **DUTIES OF ELDERS: PRIMARY DUTIES**

The primary responsibility of all of the elders of Grace Church is to “shepherd the flock of God that is among” us (1 Peter 5:2). We see these shepherding functions of an elder as being summarized under the following headings:

**1. Shepherding Involves Knowing the Sheep.** Just as the Good Shepherd knows His sheep and His sheep know Him, so under-shepherds (John 10:14-15) need to know their sheep and the sheep know their shepherds. We need to know both who constitutes the flock and the individual life circumstances, challenges, and health of each member of the flock. Membership identifies the entire Grace Church flock for whom we have “to give an account” (Heb. 13:17) and spheres and small groups further define an under-shepherds immediate responsibility. In order to know the individual members, a shepherd will typically oversee some Home Groups or lead one himself. If an elder identifies a sheep that is bruised, wounded, or straying he is now able to meet individually to know them more personally and care for them more effectively.

**2. Shepherding Involves Feeding the Sheep.** In order to keep the flock healthy and strong the elders need to feed the sheep. Just as the Father is committed to feeding the sheep (Ezekiel 34:14:15) and leading them to “green pastures” and “still waters” (Psalm 23:2), so His under shepherds need to feed the sheep. As under shepherds of God’s flock the elders are to feed the sheep with God’s word since “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). This requires the elders to know their Bibles and to effectively teach and apply God’s word in various settings and by various means. Feeding the sheep also requires the elders to equip the sheep on how to read their Bibles and to encourage the sheep to feed daily on God’s word.

**3. Shepherding Involves Leading the Sheep.** In order to keep the flock together and direct them towards “green pastures” (Psalm 23:2) the elders need to lead the sheep. Just as the Good Shepherd leads the sheep “beside quiet waters” and in “path of righteousness” (Psalm 23:2-3), so His under shepherds need to lead the sheep. Leadership begins with elders being “examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3) as each elder tends to his own walk with God, his pursuit of grace-motivated sanctification, his leading and loving his wife, his training and loving his children, and his active participation in our corporate life as a church. In addition to his example, an elder’s leadership role may include helping to cast vision, communicate direction, and provide counsel based on God’s Word. This means an elder needs to have at least a degree of leadership gift (Romans 12:8), thus being able to look ahead and discern the future needs and ministries of the church. Finally they must be men of courage, who fear God, and are willing to lead the church through difficult decisions and times by the Word of God.

**4. Shepherding Involves Protecting the Sheep.** In order to keep the flock from wandering off, attack from false teachers (Titus 1:7), or those who seek to divide the flock, the elders need to protect the sheep. Just as the Apostle Paul urged the Ephesian elders to protect the sheep (Acts 20:28-29), so Grace Church’s elders need to protect the sheep. Protecting the sheep includes teaching sound doctrine, correcting false teaching, guarding against cultural influences that cause drift, disciplining those who are unrepentant, and correcting those who are divisive. While some of this protection will come through the regular teaching of God’s Word on Sunday morning, a good measure of this shepherding will take place in the context of community. In order to effectively protect the flock an elder must be aware of the overall health of the sheep in his sphere of responsibility, both corporately and individually.

## **DUTIES OF ELDERS: OTHER SHARED DUTIES**

The elders of Grace Church will, as an eldership, share in the responsibilities to lovingly govern the church, teach the Word of God and “shepherd the flock” as overseers (1 Peter 5:1-3). Specifically, these shared responsibilities of the eldership will include:

1. Giving themselves to diligent study and fervent prayer;
2. Consistently offering their lives as examples to the flock;
3. Developing contexts for both the equipping and the work of the saints in order to present them to God as mature in Christ;
4. Mobilizing the church to the world through mercy and evangelistic ministry;
5. Instructing and examining baptism and membership candidates;
6. Giving oversight to the corporate observance of the Lord’s Supper;
7. Admonishing and/or disciplining members when needed;
8. Caring for the sick, elderly, hurting, non-participating, etc.;
9. Promoting prayer within the fellowship;
10. Clarifying and guarding church doctrine and/or practices, including the formulation of consequent church policies;
11. Participating regularly and actively in the service and ministry of the church;
12. Overseeing our small group ministry as a primary context for our shared fellowship.

## **ELDER MEETINGS**

The elder will prioritize his attendance and participation on Sunday morning and all other Grace corporate events. In addition to these corporate settings, the elder will perform his duties in the context of regularly scheduled meetings and ad hoc meetings. For non-staff elders the normal pattern of regularly scheduled meetings includes the following.

1. Sunday Service – once per week
2. Elders’ Meetings – one to two evenings per month
3. Elder Care Meetings & Retreat – typically one annual planning/vision retreat and one annual couples’ retreat.