

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF

**Grace Fellowship**

Anniston, Alabama

*JULY 5, 2004*

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# CONSTITUTION OF GRACE FELLOWSHIP

The Holy Scriptures, the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, are the Constitution of GRACE FELLOWSHIP, and shall be the sole and supreme authority for all matters they address. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right should be assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture. The Scriptures with these Bylaws constitute the governing documents of this organization.

## BYLAWS OF GRACE FELLOWSHIP

### PREAMBLE

We, an organization (church) known as GRACE FELLOWSHIP, do ordain and establish the following Bylaws to which we voluntarily submit.

### ARTICLE I

#### NAME:

The name of this church shall be "GRACE FELLOWSHIP". The word "church" as used in this Constitution shall refer to GRACE FELLOWSHIP, whereas the word "Church" shall refer to the Body and Bride of Christ.

### ARTICLE II

#### PURPOSE:

The purpose of GRACE FELLOWSHIP is to glorify God as a part of His Church universal. His glory is the ultimate motive behind everything we believe, teach, practice and represent. We seek to glorify Him by loving Him and growing to know Him greater in His true essence and nature, as revealed by His Word, the Scriptures. We also seek to glorify Him by loving others, being used of Him to bring them to know Him in growing relationships and to minister to them in His Name. (Rom. 11:36, 1Cor. 10:31, Eph. 1:5-14; Col. 1:9-10; Mat. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:9-12).

#### AUTHORITY:

The Body of Elders is the governing body of this church for all matters. (*In the absence of any elders, the pastor and other male leaders in the church may be temporarily recognized and regarded as the governing body of the church, until Elders are established.*)

#### INCORPORATION:

To implement this purpose legally the church is incorporated under the laws of the State of Alabama, so that it may own, provide and/or maintain a place of worship (including suitable real estate and buildings), receive, hold and disburse gifts, bequests and funds, and/or do all and sundry things necessary or incident to carry on such purpose.

## ARTICLE III

### DOCTRINE:

We accept the Scriptures as our sole authority in matters of faith and practice and adopt the following Confession of Faith as our interpretation of Bible Doctrine:

We believe the most important element of the local church body is the same as that for the Church universal; a true, loving and faithful relationship with and allegiance to its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. We exist only for His purposes and glory, and therefore seek to know and understand His word as our sole authority. We believe that His word is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible.

Our doctrinal position is an attempt to define and outline our core beliefs and understandings of the Bible. The following statements are not perfect, meant to be comprehensive or exclusive of other wordings or views. They are intended to help define direction and general beliefs for unity and common agreement. They are subject to change and interpretation as guided by the Scriptures and led by the Spirit.

#### A. Scripture

We believe that the Bible is God's written revelation of Himself. These Holy Scriptures are perfect as originally given by and from God ("God-breathed"), and are the eternal, inspired, inerrant, infallible, verbal and plenary very Word of God for man. We agree with the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* as further explanation on our view of the Scriptures. They are the sole authority and truth for all men for all times for all matters of faith and practice. Properly interpreted, they support or supercede all that follows. (*Ref. Appendix A*)

#### B. God

We believe that there is but one living and true God, perfect in all His attributes and character, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is the Creator, Sustainer, Controller, Judge and Ruler of all things and beings. He rules and reigns in absolute sovereignty for His Divine purposes and glory alone.

#### C. Jesus Christ

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God and God the Son, both fully God and Man, was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, crucified, dead, buried, bodily resurrected and ascended into heaven, and is now seated at God the Father's right hand. He is literally coming again to gather His prepared church to be with Him forever, to judge the world, lost men, Satan and his demons, and to finally and completely establish His kingdom.

## **D. Man**

We believe that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man lost his original innocence and freedom in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from Divine grace. Sinful in our natures, depraved and corrupt in all our parts as a result of the original sin and our natural beings, mankind is hopelessly lost apart from God's Divine grace. The purpose, happiness, and success of all men are ultimately found only in God's plan and design, for His glory alone.

## **E. Salvation**

We believe that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His works and shed blood, and not on the basis of any human merit or works. This salvation of man from deserved, spiritual and eternal death and wrath is by God's grace alone, through His gift of faith alone, and because of the Person and work of Jesus Christ alone. The ongoing process of sanctification and the future state of glorification are likewise provided and received by grace through faith.

## **F. Doctrinal Position**

We believe in the doctrinal principles and positions taught, implied and expressed in the Reformation theses of "Scripture Alone" (*Sola Scriptura*), "Christ Alone" (*Solus Christus*), "Grace Alone" (*Sola Gratia*), "Faith Alone" (*Sola Fide*), and "God's Glory Alone" (*Soli Deo Gloria*), and are in agreement with *The Cambridge Declaration* by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals in 1996. (Ref. Appendix A)

## **G. Creed (Confession)**

We believe that our creed and specific positions on the above and many other important issues are, for the most part, well expressed and explained in *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*. It is neither inspired nor infallible, but it does embody the basic doctrines that we believe the Bible teaches. We believe that all we do individually and corporately should be by God's grace alone and for His glory alone. (Ref. Appendix A)

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **MEMBERSHIP:**

Any person may become a member upon professing saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and upon satisfactorily meeting the requirements set by the Elders. A person whose permanent residence is outside a 100-mile radius of the main GRACE FELLOWSHIP facility shall be classified as a "non-resident member". This membership retains status on the church roll but does not carry the privilege of affirming the decisions of the Body of Elders. Members, such as students and servicemen, temporarily living beyond this 100-mile radius shall retain the right of affirmation.

**A. Responsibilities of Membership:**

The responsibilities of church membership are summarized in the church Agreement as follows:

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we do now in the presence of God and this church most solemnly and joyfully enter into this Agreement with one another as one body in Christ. We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit:

1. *To walk together in Christian love;*
2. *To exercise Christian care and watchfulness over one another;*
3. *To consistently practice, support and submit to church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18;*
4. *To pray with and for one another, sharing our burdens, sorrows, and joys;*
5. *To be thoughtful and courteous to one another, to be slow to take offense, and to be quick to forgive and to seek forgiveness;*
6. *To guard the spiritual and Scriptural purity, peace, prosperity of the Church, and to promote its usefulness as a witness to the saving grace of God and Christ Jesus;*
7. *To assist, through the gifts of the Spirit, in the work of the Church and to promote its usefulness as a witness to the saving grace of God and Christ Jesus;*
8. *To contribute, as the Lord directs, to the financial support of the Church, the relief of the needy, and evangelism of all people;*
9. *To love and to pray for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ;*
10. *To engage regularly in personal Bible reading and prayer, and to establish family devotions where possible;*
11. *To bring up such children as may be entrusted to our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;*
12. *To walk circumspectly in the world, to provide things honest in the sight of all men, to be faithful in engagements, exemplary in deportment, denying ungodliness and worldly lust;*
13. *To endeavor by example, by work, and by prayer, to win others to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord;*
14. *To purpose that when we remove ourselves from this place, we will as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this Agreement and the principles of God's word.*

**B. Requirements for Membership:**

1. *Profession of Faith in Jesus Christ*
2. *Completion of Membership Class*
3. *Approval by the Elders*
4. *Acceptance of the Membership Agreement*

**C. Renewal:**

There shall be an annual renewal of membership. Such renewal procedures shall be adopted and approved by the Elders.

#### **D. Discipline of Members:**

The purpose of church discipline is to effect a return to a Biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs (Galatians 6:1), to maintain purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6) and to deter sin (1 Timothy 5:20). Any member of this church who teaches or insists on holding false doctrine, and persistently conducts himself or herself in a manner inconsistent with Biblical teaching, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church shall be dealt with as follows, according to Matthew 18:15-18:

- 1. It is the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of an erring member's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct the erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.*
- 2. If the erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two other members as witnesses to warn and correct, seeking repentance and restoration.*
- 3. If the erring member still refuses to heed the warning, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the Elders, who, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall tell it to the church encouraging the congregation to pray for repentance and restoration of the erring member.*
- 4. If the erring member refuses to heed the warnings of the Elders and the church, he or she shall be dismissed from the church pursuant to the Scriptures and treated as an unbeliever. There shall be no appeal of the discipline process or the dismissal to any court. The congregation shall be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring member. It is clearly understood that the discipline process will continue to conclusion whether the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership.*

#### **E. Termination of Membership:**

Membership may be terminated in one of four ways:

- 1. By physical death.*
- 2. By transfer: When it is requested, the Elders may grant to a departing member in good standing, a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The Elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church, which is in their judgment disloyal to the gospel (Jude 3).*
- 3. By exclusion: If a member habitually absents himself from the stated meetings of the church without valid reason, or if due to relocation he ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he may be excluded from membership. If an excluded member applies again for membership, the procedures set forth will again be followed.*
- 4. By dismissal as a final step of church discipline. The Elders shall only apply the above-mentioned dismissal (see III.D) in strict accordance with the Scriptures.*

## ARTICLE V

### QUALIFICATIONS OF CHURCH LEADERS:

All persons who hold any position of leadership (including but not limited to Elders, Deacons, Servants, teachers, team members, church Staff and church workers) must meet and maintain the following spiritual qualifications for leadership:

- A. Has accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior.
- B. Is a member of Grace Fellowship (Non-members may be invited to teach on a temporary basis).
- C. Teaches no doctrine contrary to that set forth in the Constitution of Grace Fellowship (Article III).
- D. Provides systematic spiritual, financial, and physical support to Grace Fellowship.
- E. Is known for a dedicated Christian life according to the standards of God's Word, and will purpose to put any sin, including doubtful conduct and conversation, out of his/her life so that the resulting influence is helpful rather than a hindrance.
- F. Fulfills such specific Biblical qualifications and requirements as may apply to the office or position of responsibility.

## ARTICLE VI

### ELDERS, DEACONS, SERVANTS, AND STAFF:

God has provided various forms of leadership for His Church. At GRACE FELLOWSHIP we recognize and seek to channel this leadership focus through a variety of positions including Elders, Deacons, Servants, and Staff. Those who serve and minister in these roles shall collectively and individually oversee, provide for, and encourage the spiritual life, welfare, and total ministry of the congregation in order to insure the proper equipping of the saints. As God's servants and stewards, these leaders shall be persons:

1. Who meet the qualifications as given in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-15; 5:19-25; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:3-6, 1 Peter 5:1-3);
2. Who adhere to the doctrinal basis of this church;
3. Whose soundness in the faith and whose ability to serve has been examined and approved by the church.

Therefore, our church leaders are to be assisted, supported, prayed for, obeyed and respected as they carry out their duties (Heb. 13:17).

#### A. Duties of the Pastor-Teacher:

As an Elder of this church the Pastor-Teacher shall:

1. *Give himself to prayer and the study of the Word of God;*
2. *Preach and expound the Word of God;*
3. *Administer the Ordinances in accordance with the Word of God;*
4. *Share in the pastoral care of the congregation along with the other Elders.*
5. *Perform the marriage ceremony at his discretion in accordance with the laws of God and the State;*
6. *Officiate at funerals of members of the church and non-members at his discretion;*

7. *Together with the other Elders maintain church discipline;*
8. *Participate in the installation of newly designated Elders;*
9. *Act as an ex-officio member of all teams and leadership groups;*
10. *Perform other Constitutional, Scriptural, and general pastoral duties.*

The Pastor-Teacher shall be free to accept invitations to preach the Word of God to other groups or organizations, provided such engagements do not interfere with the work of the church. Before accepting invitations to speak for other groups that require his absence from the church and its activities, the Pastor-Teacher shall consult with the Body of Elders and obtain its permission.

**B. Duties of Elders (Pastors):**

1. *To be devoted to prayer and the study of God's Word and sustain a caring ministry for the flock, which involves:*
  - a. *Serving as partners with the Pastor-Teacher for the church's spiritual growth;*
  - b. *Praying for the sick and visiting the congregation;*
2. *To teach and exhort as well as refute those who contradict the truth, which involves:*
  - a. *Insuring that instructors, Bible study leaders, youth leaders and all other leaders are properly qualified;*
  - b. *Arranging for pulpit supply during the Pastor-Teacher's absence.*
3. *To lead by Christ-like example, which involves:*
  - a. *Consistently modeling spiritual character, attitudes, values, and behavior among the congregation;*
  - b. *Providing and inviting the opportunity for frequent and ongoing contact with members of the congregation;*
  - c. *Conducting the affairs of the church in an atmosphere of openness and mutual sensitivity, focusing as much on nurturing one another as on decision-making.*
4. *To oversee the affairs of the church, which involves:*
  - a. *Being responsible for the employment, terms of employment, direction, and termination of employment of pastoral staff;*
  - b. *Installing the affirmed Pastor-Teacher;*
  - c. *Approving all subordinate organizations of the church;*
  - d. *Approving all applicants for church membership;*
  - e. *Maintaining the legal status of the church;*
  - f. *Being responsible for securing funds necessary to meet the current expenses of the church;*
  - g. *Conducting the Annual Planning Meeting of the church;*
  - h. *Submitting the approved budget to the congregation at the Annual Planning Meeting of the church;*
  - i. *Approving and selecting nominations for the Body of Elders.*
  - j. *Approving nominations for the Body of Deacons*
  - k. *Communicating to the congregation on a regular basis concerning the activities and concerns of the Elders.*

- l. *To perform other constitutional, Scriptural, and general duties of oversight.*

**C. Duties of Staff:**

To perform such duties as are outlined by the Body of Elders.

**D. Duties of Deacons:**

1. *Administrate and oversee the compassionate ministries of the church.*
2. *Be aware of who in the body is sick, shut-in, in financial or material need, or who might have other practical needs.*
3. *Develop, implement, and oversee administration of compassionate ministries of the church (both to church fellowship and evangelistically).*
4. *Minister in other capacities of service at the discretion of the Elders.*
5. *Meet together regularly for worship, prayer, planning, fellowship, and accountability.*
6. *Under the direction of the Elders, manage the finances of the church.*

**E. Duties of Servants:**

To assist and lead in the mercy and serving ministries of GRACE FELLOWSHIP under the direct leadership of the Elders and the Deacons. *(This position in the church is to be filled by anyone in the church who is gifted by God to do his or her particular ministry with excellence. These individuals must also meet the requirements of 1 Timothy 3:11)*

## ARTICLE VII

### SELECTION OF ELDERS, STAFF, DEACONS, AND SERVANTS:

**A. The Pastor-Teacher:**

When the Pastor-Teacher position of this church becomes vacant, it shall be the duty of the Elders after prayerful consideration to provide for the filling of the pulpit ad interim, and to nominate for Pastor-Teacher one who possesses the requirements set forth in the Scriptures and these articles. In carrying out this process, the Elders shall directly communicate to the congregation regularly, and at reasonable intervals. We encourage that all church members who desire to suggest the name of an individual for consideration as Pastor-Teacher do so in writing to the Elders. After the Pastor-Teacher has been affirmed, a written call shall be tendered to him, signed by the Body of Elders. In this written call the Elders shall specify the financial support and a copy of this Constitution and all other church documents shall be included. The Pastor-Teacher shall be a member of the Body of Elders. The Pastor-Teacher shall serve until removed by the Elders or by his resignation.

**B. Elders (Pastors):**

The Body of Elders shall consist of as many men as the Lord has provided the church for this position. Each Elder shall serve the church in this capacity as long as he is faithful to his calling and has the confidence of his brethren and the congregation.

The selection process shall be as follows:

1. *The Elders shall continually seek the Lord's guidance on those who are in the membership whose life and gifts are consistent with their being considered for the task of Elder. The Body of Elders shall review the individuals and present a list of individuals for the affirmation of the membership at the Annual Planning Meeting.*
2. *The Elders may at any time during the year consider a man for the ministry of the Eldership and call a special congregational meeting for their consideration. In no case should a man be considered without his knowledge and prior consent. Any questions concerning the man shall be addressed to the Elders in writing no later than one week prior to the meeting.*
3. *After being set apart for the Eldership, the candidate shall be yoked to an experienced Elder so that he can become familiar with the responsibilities of the ministry. The completion of the yokeship must precede the installation of the candidate to the Eldership.*
4. *The members shall affirm the final list of Elder candidates at a church meeting.*
5. *Following recognition of an Elder by affirmation of the congregation, he shall be publicly installed in the ministry at a regular worship service by the prayer of the whole church and the laying on of hands by the existing Elders (ordination).*
6. *An Elder shall be granted a time of sabbatical if the Body of Elders agrees that it is beneficial for him to have time away from active service. No time limit will be implemented on the term of an Elder.*

The Body of Elders shall organize themselves for the purpose of church oversight and business, including a chairman and other officers as they see fit. The same person may hold two or more offices. The chairman of the Elders shall preside over the meetings of the Elders and shall insure that the Body serves the congregation in a balanced manner addressing each area of responsibility as outlined in the duties. Every three years the church shall reconfirm (or express the withdrawal of) its confidence in each of its Elders at its Annual Planning Meeting in the manner designated above. An Elder may, however, resign his office without prejudice if for good and valid reasons he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties required. In recognition that the task of Eldership is significant and is accomplished while continuing care of family and work responsibilities, we understand that individual Elders may need to take leave of some of the responsibilities of Eldership for periods of time. Such sabbatical times will be arranged through mutual consent of the Elders. The Elders will maintain a system of accountability so that an Elder who has lost the right to serve in this sacred office can be removed without further incident. It is understood and intended that all decisions of the Board of Elders shall be unanimous. (*Ref. Article XVIII*)

**C. Staff:**

The church staff shall be selected and supervised by the Elders.

**D. Deacons:**

1. *The church members shall be allowed to recommend men who are members of the church that meet the Biblical requirements for Deacons. All recommendations will be given to the Elders.*

2. *The Elders shall review the recommended men to assure that they are willing to serve as Deacons, that they meet all of the Biblical requirements of the ministry, and that they are gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve as a Deacon.*
3. *After being recommended and accepted as a candidate for the office of Deacon, the candidate shall be teamed with a Deacon so that he can become familiar with the responsibilities of a Deacon.*
4. *The members shall affirm the final list of Deacon candidates at a church meeting.*
5. *Following recognition of a Deacon by affirmation of the congregation, he shall be publicly installed in his position at a regular worship service by the prayer of the whole church and the Elders.*
6. *A Deacon shall be granted a time of sabbatical if the Elders and the Deacons agree that it is beneficial for a Deacon to have time away from active service. No time limit will be implemented on the term of Deacon.*

**E. Servants:**

The Elders and Deacons will select members to fill this position, and they will be affirmed by the congregation.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

**PROPERTY AND ASSETS:**

1. The church shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and so hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Alabama and is deemed necessary for the functioning of the church, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, bill of sale, deed, or otherwise. All property shall be held in the name of the church.
2. In case of division of the church caused by conflict (from which we pray God by His mercy to preserve us), all property and assets of the church shall belong to those who abide by its Constitution and Bylaws.
3. In case of dissolution of the church organization, the property and all assets shall be sold, either through private or public sale. From the proceeds, firstly all current and long-term obligations of the church shall be paid. Secondly, all remaining funds shall be directed to such one or more Christian organizations qualified under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, for the benefit of the church's supported missionaries and/or such other Christian endeavors as the elders or congregation shall determine. The church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by the elders or congregation, or when the church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than six members remain.
4. No real (titled or deeded) property shall be purchased or disposed of without approval of the congregation, except as noted in Section 3 above.

## **ARTICLE IX**

**MEETINGS:**

There shall be two types of meetings of the church: The Annual Planning Meeting and Special Meetings.

1. The Annual Planning Meeting shall be held at such time during the year as the Elders may determine. All reports required by the Elders for the annual planning meeting must be legibly written and submitted to the Elders one month prior to the meeting. Written reports from all church teams shall be available to the congregation prior to the Annual Meeting. These reports shall include but not be limited to a current financial statement with recommendations and comments as to past, present, and future matters relating to the congregation. Matters of church discipline shall not be included within the annual reports. All comments or amendments to the agenda or reports are to be given to the Elders, in writing and signed.

2. Special Meetings may be called:

*a. by the Body of Elders,*

*b. by the Pastor-Teacher,*

*c. when 33% or more of the membership petition the Elders.*

3. Except as otherwise provided herein, all church planning meetings shall be publicly announced in all appropriate church services.

## **ARTICLE X**

### **SUFFRAGE:**

Only members of this church who are at least eighteen years of age and whose permanent residence is within a 100-mile radius of the main GRACE FELLOWSHIP facility shall have the right to take part in the planning or special meetings of the church.

## **ARTICLE XI**

### **QUORUMS:**

The presence in person or by absentee ballot of thirty percent of GRACE FELLOWSHIP membership eligible to participate in the planning meeting shall constitute a quorum at any church meeting except for constitutional amendments which shall require a quorum of forty percent. The Elders shall be responsible for determining the number, which accurately represents the total eligible membership of the church. For purposes of determining a quorum, those members who are present and those who are absent but have submitted absentee ballots shall be counted. Fifty percent of the Elders must be present to constitute a quorum at any Elders meeting. A quorum shall be necessary for any decision.

## **ARTICLE XII**

### **AMENDMENTS:**

The Constitution of Grace Fellowship may not be changed or amended. The ByLaws or Articles of Incorporation of this church may be amended at any planning meeting by approval of the Elders and a two-thirds majority of the members participating, provided that both the text of such an amendment and the basis for its consideration have been mailed to all members at least thirty days in advance of any meeting at which such a proposal will be considered or voted upon, except that no mailing shall be required to those members who have picked up their written notices at GRACE FELLOWSHIP at least thirty days in advance of the meeting.

## **ARTICLE XIII**

### **RAISING FUNDS:**

It shall not be the policy of this church to promote suppers, parties, or engage in the sale of products and/or services for the purpose of raising funds. Any exception to this general policy must have the prior approval of the Elders.

## **ARTICLE XIV**

### **CHURCH UNITY:**

When GRACE FELLOWSHIP members disagree or their interpretations differ, we pray that the love of Christ guard our attitudes toward one another so that we exhibit a genuine concern for the building up of all God's people in an atmosphere of love.

## **ARTICLE XV**

### **INDEMNIFICATION:**

GRACE FELLOWSHIP will indemnify and hold harmless any and all Elders, Staff, Deacons, Servants or officers for any expenses actually and necessarily incurred in connection with any action, suit or proceeding against said Elders, Staff, Deacons, Servants, or officers. This indemnification shall include costs for attorney fees. The indemnification shall occur as the expenses are incurred and in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit or proceeding, on receipt of the officers, Elders, Staff, Deacons, or Servants promise: (1) to repay the amount advanced if it is proved by clear and convincing evidence in court that the officers', Elders', Staff, Deacons', and Servants' conduct involved a deliberate intent to injure the corporation's best interests, (2) to reasonably cooperate with the corporation in connection with the action, suit or proceeding. This indemnification shall be available to any officer, Elder, Staff, Deacon, and/or Servant which is made or thereafter to be made a party to any action, suit or proceeding because of the person's relationship with the corporation. Persons who are officers, Elders, Staff, Deacons, and/or Servants at the time of being made a party, or threatened with being made a party to any action, suit or proceeding, or were officers, Elders, Staff, Deacons, and Servants shall be allowed indemnification. Indemnification will also be available in criminal actions only if it is found that the officer, Elder, Staff, Deacon, or Servant had no reasonable cause to believe that the subject acts were unlawful.

## **ARTICLE XVI**

### **EFFECTUAL POWER OF THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS:**

This Constitution is by nature all powerful in all matters of this church. The ByLaws of Grace Fellowship shall take effect immediately upon their ratification by 80% vote. These ByLaws shall remain in force as presently formulated or as duly amended according to Article XII until this corporation is legally dissolved. The ByLaws shall not be suspended or abrogated.

## **ARTICLE XVII**

### **CONFIDENTIALITY OF CHURCH RECORDS:**

No member shall have the right to inspect the church records as to (i) the disciplining of any member, (ii) the hiring or firing of any employee, (iii) the need or problems of any member or employee, (iv) the financial contributions of any member, or (v) any other records which the Body of Elders may determine to be in the best interests of the church to keep confidential; except that as to item (v) of this Article XVII, the congregation in any meeting shall have the right, by a majority of those members deciding, to inspect any of such other records.

## **ARTICLE XVIII**

### **METHOD, SPIRIT, AND PURPOSE OF DECISION MAKING:**

As per Article II, the Elders shall be the governing body of the church and empowered to conduct any business on its behalf. And as per Article VII the Elders should be unanimous in all its decisions. However, it is intended that the Elders should receive suggestions from, communicate with and seek the input and support from the congregation on all matters of significance to all (e.g. changes in doctrinal position, corporate vision or direction, selection of leadership, purchase of real property or indebtedness, etc.). When any issue is taken to the membership for approval or affirmation, the intent is that they should be unanimous also. If any member cannot in good conscience vote and support in the affirmative, they are obligated to make their prayerful concerns or objections known to the Elders. By such we trust that God may use anyone with a Biblical basis, principle, or concern to help the church prevent or correct a mistake and find His will. Otherwise, the Elders should help anyone objecting to understand the affirmative position or, only after sincere prayer and consideration, overrule them and confirm the decision with the majority. As per Article XIV, we desire to promote and preserve the unity of the church by maintaining a singleness of mind, love, and purpose on every matter, if at all possible. May God be glorified in all our attitudes and actions.

## APPENDIX A

### **ATTACHMENTS & REFERENCES (with Scripture Proofs):**

1. *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*  
(The International Council of Biblical Inerrancy, Chicago, Illinois 1978)
2. *The Cambridge Declaration*  
(Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996)
3. *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*  
(Assembly of Baptist Ministers, London, England, 1689; later adopted as *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith* in 1744; re-issued by Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1855; revised and reprinted in 1958, 1963, 1966, 1970, 1974; as presented by Carey Publications, Eighth Edition, 1997)
4. *Grace Fellowship Church Outline*
5. *Grace Fellowship Church Policies*