

# **Manual of Church Order**

Grace Baptist Church of Cook County, GA

*“Let all things be done decently and in order”*

*(1 Corinthians 14:40)*

*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

*(1 Peter 2:9-10)*

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## Church Charter

Since July of 2017, we have met together as a church in homes or in our currently rented facility in Adel, GA (The Old Adel Primitive Baptist Church Building now owned by the Adel Historic Society). Along the way, we have adopted in our church meetings a Church Charter, a Church Covenant, and Articles of Faith. We are now prepared to adopt a Church Constitution as well. As we adopt this Church Constitution we also reaffirm, by our signatures below, our voluntary commitment and acceptance of our Church Charter, our Church Covenant, and our Articles of Faith (1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith).

Therefore:

On this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2019 we the undersigned having received Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior and having been baptized by immersion in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in obedience to His command, do hereby constitute ourselves to be a Baptist church patterned after the New Testament example.

Moreover, this church through the authority invested in it by Jesus Christ shall have the right to administer the ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper and shall seek the salvation of the lost through the proclamation of the gospel while encouraging one another in Christian love.

Furthermore, this church shall be governed by the will of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and in accordance with the "Church Membership Covenant", the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith\*, and our Church Constitution which we do hereby adopt by the affixing of our signatures.

\* (Historical Note: Regarding the 1689 LBCF Chapter 26 paragraph 4: we cannot, with certainty, agree that the Pope is the Anti-Christ)

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## **Church Membership Covenant**

Having, as we trust, been brought by God's grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to Him, and having been transformed by the Spirit into a new creation with a new nature, and thus being baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious power, solemnly and joyfully affirm our covenant with each other (Eph. 2:1-10; Rom. 12:10; Heb. 3:12-14; 10:24, 25).

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church; exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require (Jn. 13:34,35; Rom. 12:10; Heb. 3:12-14; 10:24, 25). We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others (Heb. 10:24, 25; Eph. 6:18). We will endeavor to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends (Eph. 4:12-16; Tit. 2:1-3:8). We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows (Rom. 12:10, 13, 15; Gal. 6:1-2). We will seek, by Divine strength, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as our old life has been crucified and buried with Christ, and we have now been raised up into spiritual union with Christ; so there is on us a special responsibility and expectation to lead a new & holy life (Rom. 6:1-8:13; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 4:17-6:9). We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will further contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations (Phil. 1:3-7; Col. 3:12-17, Matt. 28:19; I Cor. 11:23-26; Matt. 18:15-17; I Tim. 3:15; II Tim. 1:13; I Cor. 9:8-12,13,14).

We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word (Heb. 10:24, 25). May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all (II Cor. 13:14). Amen.

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## **CHURCH CONSTITUTION**

### **Preamble:**

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous (self-governing) local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by his laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ, through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are elders and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of elder and deacon is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

### **Article 1 – Church Name & Constitutional Adoption:**

The name of this church shall be **Grace Baptist Church of Cook County, Georgia** and we do hereby adopt and establish this Constitution as our Articles of Governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible, our Church Charter, our Articles of Faith, and our Church Covenant. We therefore, voluntarily and cheerfully submit ourselves to these articles.

Should this church incorporate with the State of Georgia, it shall be incorporated as: **Grace Baptist Church of Cook County, Georgia, Inc.** and any corporate officers required by law shall be chosen by the membership meeting in conference and such officers must be an elder, deacon, treasurer, or clerk of this church. Officers of the corporation shall be elected annually and the Clerk shall be responsible for filing the annual report with the office the Georgia Secretary of State. A copy of the annual report shall be placed in the minutes of the church for safe keeping. The Clerk of the church shall serve as the as the Registered Agent for the Corporation.

### **Article 2 - Purpose:**

The purpose of this church shall be to glorify God, edify the saints, contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, and evangelize the lost, all in accordance with Holy Scripture.

### **Article 3 - Articles of Faith:**

God's Holy Word, The Bible, is our only rule of faith and practice. But we also understand that many churches and denominations also claim the Bible for their only rule of faith and practice. Therefore we believe the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith is the best summary of our doctrinal position. We believe it to be in accordance with the revealed Word of God as revealed in the 66 books of the Bible. Therefore, as a local autonomous church we adopt the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith as our Articles of Faith. We are also in full agreement with the Southern Baptist Convention's 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

### **Article 4 - Membership:**

A. Qualifications for Church Membership:

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1. To become a member of this group of people who have been called out of the world for God's purpose, glory, and worship (Romans 8:28-30, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Eph 1:3-14) and are known as the church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ, God's Son. That is, he must trust in Jesus Christ alone for saving him from his own personal sins (John 1:12-13, John 3:16, Romans 10:13, Eph 1:7, Eph 2:8-9, Titus 3:3-5). Thus, the person acknowledges that Christ was his own personal substitute when He died on the cross and suffered the penalty for his sin and understands that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and that only a perfectly unblemished sacrifice no less than Jesus Christ Himself, who is God, could reconcile him to God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Thus, the person is proclaiming "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20)."
2. The person must give evidence by his conduct and conversation of actually experiencing a changed life and being saved from his sins (Romans 6:1-4). Thus, his lifestyle reflects he has a new nature (Titus 3:3-7). This new nature is known as regeneration or a new life.
3. This person must also have publicly identified with Jesus Christ by submitting himself to the ordinance of believer's baptism. Believer's baptism is the practice of one who believes in Jesus submitting himself to the immersion of his entire body in water while the one immersing or dipping him into the water declares he is doing so "in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19-20, Acts 2:41, Acts 8:36-39). The act of baptism does not save a person but is commanded by God to be observed by the one who personally believes in Jesus. Baptism is a picture or symbol of what has already taken place in the life of that person. When a believer is baptized, he is personally and publicly identifying with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-4).
4. The person desiring to be a part of this church must also voluntarily agree to enter into a committed relationship, known as a covenant, with the other members of this church because we are a family (Matt 12:49-50) and we are knit together in love (Col 2:2) as expressed in a document known as The Church Covenant. This written document expresses many of the responsibilities we have toward one another as revealed in the Word of God.
5. The person must also be willing to submit to the discipline of this church, which means holding each other accountable for the way we act (including elders, deacons, other officers, and all members) - Matt 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-15, 1 Timothy 5:19-20).
6. The person must also be willing to be instructed in God's Word; be willing to fellowship with its other members by faithfully attending this church's worship services, its ordinances (Baptism and the Lord's Supper); its Members' (business) meetings; and must be committed to a life of prayer. We recognize the fact that individuals may be sick, absent for occasional vacations, or may have emergencies that would prevent them from being with the church from time to time but not more often than not (unless seriously ill or incapacitated). This policy "more often than not" gives us a measure of our accountability to one another each week. For we if we do not see our fellow member in the services of the Lord one week, we should inquire into them and make sure that all is well. For, we take seriously the command that we are instructed NOT to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of

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some is (Heb 10:25). The gathering together of the membership of this local body each week is considered “the norm” and not the exception in the life of each member. Members should anticipate, attend, and arrange their personal lives in such a way as not to be absent from the various services, ordinances, and meetings of this church. The person desiring membership in this church must take seriously his faithfulness to the apostles’ doctrine, fellowship with other believers, breaking of bread, and prayer. For God’s Word says: “they that received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly (were firmly resolved) in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42).”

### B. Reception of Members:

1. In accordance with Eph 5:27 and 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, this church seeks to exercise biblical caution in regards to the professed faith of any person seeking membership. The prospective member’s Christian faith is deemed essential. The standard to be used in this determination is to be the principle of spiritual direction rather than spiritual achievement. What is to be looked for is evidence of the Holy Spirit within as evidenced by faith in Christ’s historical death on the cross as the only propitiation for personally acknowledged sin (1 Corinthians 15:3-5), repentance, and a desire to please the Lord Jesus Christ by substantial obedience to His commands. The membership process is to be applied whether the applicant comes by faith, by letter, by statement in lieu of a letter, or by restoration (having previously been excluded from the fellowship and oversight of this church). Therefore, regardless of any previous church affiliation, profession, or current church status with any other church, all individuals desiring to unite with this church must attend a “New Members Class” taught by an elder before becoming a member. The purpose of this class is to allow those individuals to ask questions before joining, to inform those individuals of our doctrine and polity, and to ask the candidate questions regarding his or her salvation experience, baptism, manner of life, prior church affiliation, and willingness to enter into a covenant relationship with this church. During this class, a Bible shall be provided to each prospective member (if they do not already possess one) as well as a copy of the church Charter, Covenant, Constitution, and Articles of Faith. Upon completion of the class and after a reasonable period of time for the candidate to review the documents or be asked further questions by the elders, the individual may present himself to the church during any meeting and ask to become a member.
2. An applicant may be received regardless of sex (the person willingly accepts his or her God-given gender as a biological male or biological female), race, color, national origin, or economic condition, by any of the four means listed in paragraph 4 below. Individuals who practice, affirm, approve, endorse, or promote homosexual behavior shall not be considered candidates for membership and such behavior shall not be tolerated among the membership (See Article 13 concerning our Marriage Policy). Individuals that are members of secret societies such as freemasons will not be considered for membership.
3. Reception shall be based upon a unanimous vote of the membership at any Members’ meeting accompanied by the right hand of Christian fellowship and each member shall be presented a new member certificate and shall be listed as members in the minutes of the church by the Clerk. Dissenting votes must be thoroughly investigated by the elders and resolved. The dissenting member(s)

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may elect to vote for a procedural delay if they feel the need for an extended period of observation.

4. Means of becoming a member (provided all of the qualifications of A1 thru A6 above have been met):
  - a. By Faith: Any person publicly confessing personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and giving evidence of a regenerate heart (also known as a new nature) as described in Paragraph A above and adopting the views of “faith and order” held by this church shall be admitted into the membership of this church. “Faith and order” means that the person believes in salvation by the grace of God alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone, that baptism by immersion takes place after salvation, that baptism in no way contributes to the salvation of the individual, and the Lord’s Supper is to be received only by those who have been saved and baptized by immersion. For the Scripture says “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9).” Scripture further states, “then they that gladly received his word were baptized and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42-44).” Our best explanation of what we believe God’s Word teaches on various doctrines is found in our Articles of Faith (The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith). The person joining this church must be in substantial agreement with these Articles and agree not to disrupt the unity of the church regarding these Articles of Faith.
  - b. By Letter: Members from Baptist churches of like “faith and order” may be received into membership by letter of recommendation from Baptist churches of like “faith and order”.
  - c. By Statement: Those who have been baptized upon profession of faith and previously accepted into the membership of a Baptist Church of like “faith and order” but who because of loss of records or similarly unavoidable circumstances have no regular “letter of dismissal”, may be received into the membership of the church by vote.
  - d. By Restoration: Any member whose name has been erased from the church roll or who has been excluded from the church membership may be restored by vote of the membership upon confession of any sin committed and by giving satisfactory evidence to the church of having maintained a Christian character.
- C. Dismissal of Members: The Policy of this church shall be to remove names of members from the membership roll and dismiss those persons from the church fellowship in the following manner:
  1. Upon Death of the member.
  2. Letter: Letters of recommendation for any member who is in good standing (those members not under disciplinary censure of the church) with the church may be granted by vote of the church to any Baptist church of like “faith and order” upon request for letter from said church. It will be the policy of this church to issue letters of recommendation only to Baptist churches of like “faith and order”.

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3. Exclusion: In case a member engages in conduct unbecoming of a Christian so that the church and the name of Christ are brought into disrepute and the process of Matthew 18:15-18 has been strictly adhered to and the individual shows no signs of repentance, then the name of the member in question may be removed from the church membership roll by vote of the members present at any regular members' meeting of the church (1 Corinthians 5, and 2 Corinthians 2:6). (See article on Church Discipline for further explanations).
4. Members joining another denomination (We commend them to the grace of God).

### **Article 5 – Church Government (Polity):**

A. The One and Only Head and Lord of this Church is Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18, Ephesians 4:15, Colossians 1:17-18) and it will be ruled by His will as revealed in His Word. Our Church Charter, our Covenant, our Constitution, and our Articles of Faith give practical expression to what we believe Our Great Head teaches regarding doctrine and practice and they shall be used as our best interpretation of His Word.

B. We believe the Lord as Head of His church has vested final earthly authority in the gathered congregation, thus we are “congregational” in our polity. The New Testament clearly teaches that each believer has been gifted with at least one spiritual gift in order to contribute to the edification of the entire body (1 Corinthians 12, Eph 4:16). The priesthood of every believer is also taught in Scripture (Romans 5:1-5, 1 Timothy 2:5, Heb 4:14-16). Furthermore, the New Testament tends to stress that the entire church group was to be unified (1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 12:25, Romans 15:4); that each member was a part of the covenant relation (Acts 4:32, Colossians 2:2, 1 Corinthians 10:17, Ephesians 4), and that group consensus was the ideal (Acts 4:32, Acts 15:22). Therefore, we believe each person of the congregation plays an important role in the life of the church and that the church will function at its best when each member is contributing his or her gift under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. As proof of the gathered congregations' authority and participation in governing, we submit the following proof texts (though not exhaustive).

- In matters of electing officers and or persons tasked with certain responsibilities on behalf of the church (Acts 6:5, Acts 14:23, 2 Corinthians 8:19);
- In matters of church discipline (Matt 18:15-18, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 2:6);
- making judgments between members (1 Corinthians 6:1-7);
- In matters of maintaining purity in the church (1 Corinthians 5, Rev 2 & 3);
- In matters of excluding unrepentant members (1 Corinthians 5: 4-13);
- restoring repentant members which have been previously excluded (2 Corinthians 2:7);
- ensuring that the qualifications for officers have been met before they are set apart for such office (1 Timothy 3),
- In being present when sinning elders are rebuked before the entire congregation (1 Tim 5:21);
- In sending Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to find out why some of the Jerusalem members were teaching another gospel (Acts 15:4);
- In receiving messengers ( Acts 15:4);
- In hearing matters of doctrinal concern (Acts 15);
- In participating in sending messengers after a decision has been reached ( Acts 15:22),
- choosing those who are entrusted with the funds of the church and knowing the destination and purpose of those funds (2 Corinthians 8:18-22).

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The above texts clearly show the congregation to be actively involved in all areas of church life while functioning under the leadership of its elders. Therefore, the congregational or independent form of church government is clearly taught in Scripture and thus shall be the form of church government used in this church. The congregational form of church government shall not be violated. May God help us as we consider such a weighty responsibility!

C. Although final earthly authority is vested in the gathered congregation, God has seen fit to gift his local churches with men known as pastors, elders, or bishops (hereafter referred to as elders) who are called and qualified to care for (love, lead, teach, oversee, guide, rebuke, pray for, etc.) his churches and equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-16, Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). Therefore, it is incumbent that the church:

- Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. (Heb 13:7)
- Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. (Hebrews 13:17)
- To know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)
- Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially them which labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And the laborer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. (1 Timothy 5:17-20)

D. Regarding how this church associates with other churches, this church shall be autonomous and shall be subject to no other ecclesiastical body. By autonomy we mean the church is independent and self-governing. There is therefore, no external power that can dictate courses of action to this local church. However, this church may voluntarily cooperate with and have representation in the denominational causes sponsored by Southern Baptists including the Southern Baptist Convention, Georgia Baptist Mission Board, the local southern Baptist mission association, and any other like-minded causes (in harmony with our charter, covenant, constitution, and articles of faith) throughout the world which this church deems appropriate. The number of Messengers that may be allowed to participate at any such convention, meeting, or council shall be elected by the church at any members' meeting or worship meeting of the church. Messengers shall represent the church and shall enjoy the privileges afforded them at such convention or meetings.

E. General Responsibilities of The Church: The church shall be responsible for contending for the faith; guarding against heresy; voting on officers; receiving members; dismissing members; restoring members; sending missionaries; hearing cases between members; exercising discipline of its members, selecting messengers to local, associational, and national meetings; approving budgets; hearing reports from the elders, deacons, or others; and taking action on any other issues that they deem appropriate. They are to be ever mindful of their covenant obligations to one another. Again, the gathered congregation is the final earthly authority in all matters, but the congregation is to make decisions based on the Word of God and must submit to the oversight of the elders as they counsel them in making wise decisions. A spirit of unanimity must always be the desire and goal of the church. For Paul admonished the Corinthian Church with these words:

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“Now I beseech thee brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye may be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10).”

- F. The scriptural officers of this church shall be elders & deacons and only men shall be appointed to such offices.

### **Article 6 – Elders (also known as pastors & bishops):**

#### A. Elder Election Process:

This church believes the Lord calls and equips certain men to lead His church (Eph 4:11-15, Acts 20:28) which He has purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). These men are referred to in Scripture as elders, bishops (overseers), and pastors. These various terms are applied to the same individual(s) in scripture. For example in Acts 20:17, Paul summons the elders, then refers to them as overseers in Acts 20:28 and also tells them to feed (shepherd or pastor) the Lord’s flock (Acts 20:28). Also, in Titus 1:5 and Titus 1:7 Paul refers to a group of men as elders (1:5), while two verses later (1:7) refers to one of this company as a bishop. Therefore, we believe that all three terms describe the ministry of one office with various functions. For example, in his function as elder the man must be mature in the faith and able to teach others. In his function as bishop he must oversee all of the various ministries of the church as one who will give an account. And in his function as pastor he must “shepherd” the precious flock of the Lord by feeding them the Word of God and ministering to their various spiritual needs.

Furthermore, we believe that scripture teaches a plurality of male leadership as the biblical norm. Therefore, the church should desire and pray earnestly that the Lord would raise up and reveal to us a plurality of men who are called, qualified, gifted, and passionate about praying for, teaching, leading, guiding, overseeing, ministering, and spiritually protecting His bride, the church.

Although we believe that a plurality of male leadership is the biblical norm, we also understand and adamantly believe that God alone calls and equips overseers (Acts 20:28) and provides elders for His churches (Eph 4:11). As God calls these men and equips them to lead his precious flock, the weight of the calling may overwhelm them to the point that they do not feel adequate for the task (Exodus 3, Jeremiah 1:6), and yet it is natural for them to aspire or desire to be bishops or overseers (1 Tim 3:1) of the Lord’s flock. Therefore, it is to be expected that a man with this calling and gift will humbly manifest it and should make his desire to be a bishop known to his church family after much personal examination and prayer.

As mentioned previously, only God makes elders and only God knows the heart and motives of any man who is seeking the office of a bishop. Many men throughout the ages have sought the office of a bishop for personal gain and selfish motives and have injured His church due to such sinful desires. Therefore, the Lord has given us the Scriptures that list every qualification the man must meet before being set apart to the office of a bishop in His church. Hence, regardless of desire or motive, the man seeking the office of a bishop must be fully qualified according to Scripture (1 Tim 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9) and must be a member of this church.

Some men may not feel comfortable expressing such a desire openly, lest they give the impression they are trying to self-promote themselves to such office. Therefore, the church may also nominate a man who is a member of the church (Acts 6:5), but only if it genuinely feels that the man is qualified

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and gifted for such service and only if the man is fully persuaded in his own heart and mind that God has indeed called him and gifted him for the task. He must desire the office and not serve under compulsion, but willingly.

Consequently, once the candidate makes his humble desire to be a bishop known and reveals to the church his desire to assume the awesome and weighty responsibility of overseeing the Lord's flock (in this church or perhaps in another), the church shall begin a time of prayer and fasting for the candidate and earnestly seek the Lord's will in the matter (Acts 1, Acts 11). At this time, the candidate will begin meeting with any existing elder(s) of the church and they should begin the process of praying for the candidate, encouraging the candidate, examining the candidate, and getting to know the candidate. The elders should meet with the candidate and interview the candidate thoroughly as to his personal conversion, doctrinal beliefs, and scriptural qualifications. During the elder examination process, which may take several weeks, the elders should remind the church of their responsibility to pray for the process and the candidate. After thorough examination, prayer, and consultation with the candidate, the elders shall pray and discern if the process should move forward. If the elders discern that the process should move forward after meeting with the candidate privately, the elders shall declare in a members meeting that the candidate is "potentially" qualified. The process should then proceed to a much more "church-wide" process which will permit the congregation to discern if the man is indeed qualified.

During this "church-wide" process, the membership shall seek to know the man and the man shall make himself available to the membership in order to be known. For example, the man may be asked to meet with a family so that they may discuss and hear his views on various doctrines. He may also be asked to teach lessons or preach to the people so that they may hear him teach & preach, for he must be able to teach in order to be an elder.

At all times, the members of the church shall use discretion and treat the man with utmost respect when interviewing or talking with him privately or publicly and the man shall respect the right of the people to ask him direct questions, but those questions must be asked in the spirit of Christian humility. The intent of such inquiry is to settle in our minds that the man is scripturally qualified for the office. We do not expect to find a sinless man, but we are to be diligent in our task to ascertain if he is called, gifted, and qualified. It is impossible to know if he is qualified if he is not known, thus the process may take a while and we need not expect it to be a sudden process. We are reminded in scripture: "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thy self pure...Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after." (1 Timothy 5: 22 & 24)

Throughout the entire process, it should be obvious to the man that he will be questioned regarding his life and beliefs in such a way that (at times) may be extremely uncomfortable and intrusive. Any man seeking the office must be willing to be asked direct questions whether in public or in private and the church shall expect honesty and disclosure from the man. The man is seeking a church office with qualifications which mainly deal with integrity and character. Thus, the church must seek to know the man thoroughly. Consequently, the man should expect that his current or previous employers may be called, credit checks may be performed, and back-ground checks may be performed, etc. If the man has anything to hide, he need not present himself as a candidate for the office of bishop.

Besides meeting with the elders, individuals, & families privately, there shall be a time appointed after he is declared "potentially" qualified, when the man is to appear publicly before the church in a

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members' meeting in order to share his conversion experience & his reasons for desiring the office of a bishop. During such meeting a presbytery consisting of elders from this church and any other churches of like "faith and order" shall preside. The presbytery shall ask the man questions publicly and he shall give his answers publicly. He shall be asked questions regarding his views on topics such as the doctrine of the Bible, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Angels, the doctrine of Man, the doctrine of Sin, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of Worship, the doctrine of Salvation, the doctrine of the Church, the doctrine of last things, his views on marriage, homosexuality, creation, arminianism, calvinism, the charismatic movement, prayer, missions, the role of women in the church, our articles of faith, and any other subject that may arise. Due to the admonition of Paul to lay hands on no man suddenly, several meetings may be required.

After all such meetings have taken place and the church, the elders, and the candidate agree to move forward, the man shall be voted on as an elder in any members' meeting. Upon three quarters of a majority vote of the gathered church at a member's meeting, the man shall be considered set apart to the office of elder and a presbytery of elders who questioned him publicly shall preside at his ordination service.

### B. Ordination:

At the ordination service (to be scheduled by the newly elected elder, church elders, the church, and those able to form a presbytery), members of the presbytery shall give a charge to the man and a charge to the church, after such charge, the presbytery shall lay their hands upon the head of the man and pray for him. He shall thus be set apart and ordained as an elder or elder in the gospel ministry and shall be licensed by the church to preach the gospel if not already licensed.

The church has now openly acknowledged that they have recognized the call of God on this man's life and acknowledged him as a gift from God to the flock, and that he is gifted for such service. They have diligently examined him and they have determined (as much as they possibly can) that he meets every qualification for the office for which he has so earnestly desired (1 Tim 3:1). Paul describes his work as a "good work" and we now publicly and supportively commend him to it. The church is now required to submit to him in things related to his office as an elder, for God has specifically commanded him to take the oversight of the church (1 Peter 5:2). The church is to pray for him, support him, encourage him, and love him.

### C. Elders length of service:

From the New Testament, it is clear that elders lived in and around the communities where they worked and worshipped and were known and trusted by the people they served. They were men who the people elected and trusted. The churches looked to them in matters of instruction, prayer, and counsel. In short, the elders played a vital role as members of the family of God. Therefore, we believe that once elders have been chosen by us, we are to view them as members of the family specifically gifted by the Lord to lead us, pray for us, edify us, and instruct us in the ways of the Lord. We are not to look at them as simple "employees" or "hired guns" of the church who are not "of us" but rather, as members of our local family and we shall treat them as such. Consequently, elders in this church shall serve indefinitely as long they meet the scriptural qualifications and have a desire to do so. For it is we ourselves who examined them, elected them, confirmed the call of God on them, and ordained them to the work for which we set them apart. We promised then and there to support them in their office and they should expect us to keep our promise and commitment to them.

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### D. Elder Resignation:

Based on the fact that God calls and equips a man for the office of bishop, and based on the fact that extraordinary effort went into the examination, election, and ordination of an elder, it would seem unusual to the church that a man would resign his office as an elder unless for obvious reasons such as relocation, health, etc.

Therefore, in the event that an elder feels the need to voluntarily resign his office, the church requests that he do so, with his reason for such, during a members' meeting of the gathered church since it is the church which elected him to his office. The church requests that he not resign during a regularly called worship service when the people have assembled to worship the Lord in a corporate manner.

Upon the voluntary resignation of his office, and assuming he is resigning for honorable reasons, the elder would still remain a member in "good standing" (not under the discipline of the church) with the church and continue the covenant relationship (with all its rights and responsibilities) with the other members until and if he decides to move his membership to another church. If he is resigning for reasons of unchristian behavior the church shall meet in conference to decide how best to consider the elder's conduct, and if necessary, he shall be rebuked before the entire congregation in order that others may fear (1 Timothy 5:20).

### E. Elder Removal:

Elders serve at the will of the membership of this church. They are elected and ordained to such office after much prayer and examination. Thus, it is incumbent upon the church to proceed with humility and caution when considering the removal of an elder from office or insisting upon his resignation. Nevertheless, the elder serves at the will of the people and can be removed from his office as an elder by a vote of the congregation at any Member's meeting, provided that such vote has been announced for two consecutive Lord's Day morning worship services (not including the day of the Member's Meeting) prior to the Member's meeting.

### F. Elder Discipline:

May God spare and protect our elders always. May He protect them from their own sinful desires, and the false accusations of men, demons, and Satan.

Scripture clearly teaches that an accusation against an elder is a very serious matter. It is unwise to bring an accusation against an elder (or any member for that matter) without sufficient evidence in hand that would essentially assure conviction by the church. Therefore, those bringing such accusations must be doubly sure before they proceed in bringing the accusation. The Lord requires that an accusation against an elder (and others) be brought by two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19-20 & Matthew 18:15-17). Our belief is that these witnesses should first confront the accused elder with the accusation in hopes of bringing the elder to a state of repentance (Matthew 18:15-17). If that process leads to repentance, the witnesses have won their brother and the matter is over. Should the process of Matt 18:15-17 be unsuccessful, the witnesses should declare to the accused their intent to "tell it to the church" as the next step in the process.

If the accusation is still unresolved and the elder unconvinced of his sin after the above mentioned steps, the witnesses should then notify any other elders of the accusation (if they are not already involved as witnesses) in order to notify the church. The elders shall not minimize the accusation of

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the witnesses (for two or three witnesses are all that is required) and they shall not show partiality among the eldership when considering the accusation. The elders shall prepare themselves to lead the church through the process of bringing the accusation to the attention of the gathered church during a member's meeting, while at the same time imploring the accused elder to repent of his sin.

Should the elder still remain unconvinced of the accusation, the gathered church now has the awesome and weighty responsibility of hearing the case, discerning the truth, and deciding the matter (Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Cor 5, 1 Cor 6:1-8). The two or three witnesses shall bring the accusation during the member's meeting and order shall be kept by the moderator. Each witness shall rise in turn and address the gathered congregation individually in his or her own words and shall accuse the elder publicly and shall limit his or her words to the matter at hand. Each witness shall remember that the person whom they are accusing is professed to be a brother in the Lord and an officer of the Lord's church and they shall speak of him respectfully but factually. After the witnesses have accused the brother, he may present his case to the body if he feels he has been falsely accused.

The church shall then deliberate the facts with any elders providing scriptural counsel as necessary (Acts 15). Questions may be asked but each in turn. If more time is needed to gather more facts, the meeting may be adjourned and reconvened at a later date not to exceed two weeks. Until a decision can be reached, the accused elder shall be suspended from his duties as an officer. Ultimately, a decision shall be reached by majority vote of the church in a members' meeting and the vote shall be signified by the raising of hands.

Should the accusation against the elder stand and be confirmed by the church, he shall be rebuked (whether he be present or not) by the elders in the presence of the gathered church during a members' meeting. He shall then be removed from his office as an elder.

At this point in the meeting, the elder is still a member of the church, though not an officer. Should the elder repent and confess his wrong doing during the meeting, he shall make his confession to the church but he shall not be reinstated to any office of the church except by unanimous consent of the church and then not before a period of two years from his confession (1 Tim 5). If unmoved and unrepentant even after he has been approached by witnesses, found guilty by his fellow members, and stripped of his office, the church shall then proceed to a second vote to excommunicate him from the membership of the church with the hope that such action will lead him to repentance and be restored to the church in the future.

Should the church declare the accusation to be unfounded, the elder shall remain in his office, and the church shall rebuke the false witnesses openly for disturbing the unity and peace of the church. As a consequence of their false and unfounded accusation against the elder, any offices held by the false witnesses immediately become vacant (to be filled by the church at any members' meeting) and they shall not hold office in the church for a period of three years and until such time as they demonstrate to the body that they understand the detrimental affects of disturbing the peace and unity of the church.

### **Article 7 – Deacons:**

- A. Election Process: Once the elders and church recognize the need for men to assist the elders and church in matters of temporal affairs, the church may nominate men from the membership who are scripturally qualified according to Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 to serve as deacons. Nominations for deacons may take place at a members' meeting. Those

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nominated and willing to serve shall be publicly examined and questioned by the church and elders, similar to the process described for elders. Scripture requires that a man be proved before he can be ordained as a deacon. Therefore, all candidates being considered as deacons shall have been members of the church for no less than one year before being considered for such office and each man shall have manifested his qualifications in service to the body before being nominated to such office. Scripture also teaches that the “wives” of the deacons must also meet certain qualifications and that both elders and deacons must rule their homes well. Therefore, it is to be expected that the wives of these men will assist them in their work for the Lord as helpers to their husbands, yet not in an official capacity of the church. Therefore, men whose wives do not meet the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:10 shall not serve as deacons. Upon three quarters of a majority vote of the gathered church at a members meeting, the candidates shall be set apart to the office of deacon.

- B. Ordination: Each candidate elected to the office of deacon shall be set apart by a presbytery to the office of deacon similar to the process for elders.
- C. Length of Service: Each deacon shall serve the church for a length of three years unless removed from office earlier for disciplinary reasons. Deacons shall serve for a period of three years, after which they must be reaffirmed by vote of the church meeting in conference.
- D. Duties of Deacons: In keeping with the principles of Acts 6:1-6, and the meaning of the word deacon, the deacons shall not exercise a ministry of spiritual authority such as elders. Rather, they are to carry out a practical ministry of service working with and under the direction of the elders for the good of the church. They shall endeavor at all times to engage themselves in acts of service that would allow the elders to devote themselves more fully to the ministry of prayer and the ministry of the Word. A Deacon’s mission should reflect a spirit of “How can I help?” Specifically, the deacons shall be responsible for visiting the sick; attending to the facilities and grounds of the place where the church meets; receiving, holding, and disbursing a fund for benevolences and reporting on such disbursement to the elders and the church; ensuring that the facilities are ready for worship before the church meets (such activities may include organizing folks to help clean and repair the church and grounds and facilities); they shall assist the elders in distributing the elements during the Lord’s Supper; and any other church related activities that the elders and church deem to be appropriate and necessary for the proper and orderly functioning of the church.
- E. Removal and Resignation of Deacons: Similar to the process for elders, deacons may be removed at any time by vote of the church in a members’ meeting. Deacons may also resign their office and give such resignation at any members’ meeting.

### **Article 8 – Administrative Officers & Finance Committee:**

- A. Clerk: A Clerk shall be elected by the church each year at the January members’ meeting. The clerk shall be a member in good standing with the church. The clerk shall keep and maintain a record of all regular and special members’ meetings of the church (also known as the minutes) by recording them in a book for that specific purpose. The book shall be the property of the church and shall be held in trust by the clerk. The clerk shall return the book of minutes to the church upon leaving office. The clerk shall be the organ of all written communication from the church. The clerk shall keep a record of all reports made during the members’ meetings. The clerk shall keep a record of all members and shall publish the

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membership list each year at the December members' meeting including the last known contact information (such information will keep the membership roll accurate and up-to-date). The clerk shall maintain the names of all those having access to the bank accounts and those having authorization to sign checks. In case of absence, the church shall appoint a temporary or assistant clerk.

- B. Treasurer:** A Treasurer shall be elected by the church each year at the January members' meeting. The treasurer shall be a member in good standing with the church. It is the duty of the treasurer to receive and disburse all funds related to the church. The treasurer shall deposit all tithes and offerings and any other gifts made to the church into the church bank accounts as soon as possible after receiving them. The treasurer shall keep a strict record of all accounts in a book for that purpose and such book shall be the property of the church and such book will be held in trust by the treasurer. The treasurer shall return the book of accounts to the church upon leaving office. The treasurer shall make a report to the church at the regular members' meetings. One additional member shall be elected as assistant treasurer to assist the Treasurer with his duties. These individuals shall form a counting committee to ensure the funds received are properly counted.
- C. Finance committee & Fiscal Year:** the deacons, elders, and treasurer shall compose the finance committee of the church. The committee shall meet together throughout the year in order to plan the yearly budget which shall be presented at the November members' meeting for discussion and approval. The Fiscal year for the church shall be from January 1 to December 31 of each year. See the end of this Constitution for a "Sample" Budget that can be used by the finance committee as an aid in preparing a yearly budget. Should this church decide to borrow money, it must be approved by a three quarters vote of the membership meeting in conference and the purpose for borrowing such funds shall be clearly documented in the minutes of the church. Only members of the finance committee are permitted to sign notes on behalf of the church and at least two signatures shall be required on all notes.
- D. Other Committees:** The church may organize other committees as it deems appropriate and each member of the committee shall be elected by the church. Elders shall serve as ex-officio (by virtue of one's office or position) members of all committees.

### **Article 9 – Ordinances:**

There are two ordinances of the church, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

**A. Baptism:** Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. An elder shall administer the ordinance of baptism (Matt 28:19-20, Acts 2:38, 41, Acts: 8:36-38, Romans 6:3-4, etc.).

**B. The Lord's Supper:** The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. The Lord's Supper shall be practiced as often as this church deems appropriate, but in order that it be not neglected, it shall be practiced at least quarterly.

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The Lord's Supper is open to all believers who have been baptized by immersion after conversion and who are willing to examine themselves before partaking. An elder shall explain the meaning of The Lord's Supper and exhort the church to examine themselves before observing the ordinance. An elder shall preside at the Lord's Supper with the deacons assisting him in the distribution of the elements (Matt 26:26-29, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, etc.).

### **Article 10 - Church Discipline:**

The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Cor 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin and promoting purity (1 Tim 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Gal 6:1).

The Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted the local church with the authority and responsibility to discipline members for flagrant sin or serious doctrinal error, with the goal of the restoration of the offender. This discipline is entrusted to the gathered church and is to follow the biblical pattern as set forth in Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:7-8; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Titus 3:10-11; and 2 John 7-11. Any member of this church who practices or affirms a doctrine or conduct that, in the judgment of the church, is opposed to the teaching of the Word of God, or is threatening to the testimony of this church, or is divisive to the body, shall be subject to church discipline.

Discipline will follow the said biblical pattern, and is an effort to bring the individual to repentance and protect the church from unrepentant sin. Discipline may involve exclusion from participation in ministry and communion, as well as dismissal from the fellowship of this church. An individual may be disciplined by the church short of dismissal from the fellowship, as they deem appropriate for the specific circumstance (for example, an individual may remain in certain circumstances a member of this church but be denied the privilege of serving in a particular ministry). The elders or church, as is required by Scripture, may report to the congregation the names of those who have lost membership by reason of church discipline, and the reason for that discipline, as described in Matthew 18:15-20.

The members of this church further knowingly and voluntarily agree that a member cannot voluntarily withdraw or resign his or her membership in the midst of the discipline process, and may only voluntarily withdraw or resign his or her membership if they are not the subject of a disciplinary proceeding at the time or only after a disciplinary process, of which they are the subject, has been concluded as determined by the church.

Dismissal from membership shall be by majority vote of the church at a Member's meeting. Repentance and Restoration is the Goal of church discipline.

### **Article 11- Meetings of the Gathered Church:**

**A. Worship Meetings:** The church will meet every Lord's Day (Sunday) for corporate worship at the hour(s) agreed upon by the church. The church may decide to meet for additional worship meetings as well. The church shall meet to pray; hear the Word of God preached and taught; sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; practice the ordinances as appropriate; and to generally edify and encourage one another in the faith. An elder shall preside over the worship meetings.

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### **B. Members' Meetings (Often referred to as "The Business Meeting"):**

We believe the local church has been endowed by God with His Spirit and His Word and has been given everything necessary to decide all matters relating to the affairs of the local church (1 Corinthians 6:1-6, Matt 18:15-20). Consequently, this church is congregational in its government and autonomous in its relation to all other churches and is thus subject to no other ecclesiastical body. The New Testament clearly teaches that the people were to gather together in the name of the Lord in order to be informed about church affairs and to make decisions based upon God's Word (Acts 15, 1 Corinthians 5:4, Matt 18:15-20). Therefore, members of this church shall meet together in order to stay informed and render any necessary church decisions on the Second Sunday of each month after the morning worship service. However, the time of the meeting may be moved, provided a majority present in any service is agreeable to it being moved AND at least one week's notice is given in the Sunday morning worship service. This meeting shall be known as the Members' Meeting or "Business Meeting." The November Member's meeting shall also be used to discuss and approve the upcoming yearly budget (from January to December) as presented in writing by the Finance committee and to elect any committees or officers needed in order to give practical effect to that budget.

### **C. Moderator for Members' Meeting.**

God has provided the church with men to lead it and keep order in making decisions. These men are known as elders and they have the responsibility to oversee and guide the church. Thus, elders are to teach the Word and the church is responsible and accountable for rendering decisions based upon the Word of God. Therefore, it is scripturally reasonable for an elder to oversee Members' Meetings. Therefore, the church shall elect a Moderator from among the elders if possible and the Moderator shall present information to the body in an orderly manner and do his best to keep order. See Article 12 for "Rules of Decorum" which shall be used to govern "procedure" during all Members' meetings.

### **D. Quorum for Meetings & Voting:**

The members, elders, deacons, and any other officers present at any Members' Meeting shall constitute a quorum to do business. It is the scriptural duty of every member to attend all such meetings. We shall be mindful of our covenant with one another before, during, and after all meetings (1 Corinthians 1:10, Romans 15:5-6, Psalms 133:1). Unless noted elsewhere in this constitution, all decisions shall be determined by the following vote at a Members' meeting:

Membership: unanimous vote of members present and voting

Dismissal of members: majority vote of members present and voting

Restoration of members: unanimous vote of members present and voting

Officers (scriptural and administrative): Three-fourths majority of members present and voting

Borrowing Money: Three-fourths majority of members present and voting

Amendments to the Constitution: Three-fourths majority of members present and voting

Dissolution of the church: Three-fourths majority of members present and voting

All other decisions: majority vote of members present and voting

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### **Article 12 - Rules of Decorum for Members' Meetings:**

#### **Courtesy when Speaking to the Group:**

1. Please stand or raise your hand if you would like to speak.
2. Members may ask questions (related to the subject and one at the time) after being recognized by the moderator.
3. If two members rise to speak at the same time, the moderator will decide who speaks first.

#### **Making Motions:**

1. All business shall be presented by a motion, made by one member, and seconded by another.
2. No discussion can take place until the motion is made, seconded, and stated by the moderator.
3. A motion cannot be withdrawn after it has been discussed, except by consent of the body.
4. A motion, having been discussed, must be put to a vote, unless withdrawn, laid on the table, referred to a committee, or postponed.
5. A motion lost (it fails to carry) should not be recorded by the clerk, unless ordered by the body.
6. A motion lost cannot be renewed at the same meeting.
7. A motion should contain only one main point. If it contains more, it must be divided at the request of any member, and the points acted on separately.
8. Only one motion (or an amendment to that motion, or a substitute motion) can properly be before the meeting at a time.
9. A motion to adjourn is always in order, except while a member has the floor, or a vote is being taken.

#### **Amendments:**

1. Amendments may be made to motions in three ways; by omitting, by adding, or by substituting words or sentences.
2. No amendment should be made which changes the meaning of the original motion, but a substitute motion may be offered, which may change the meaning of the original motion.
3. The amendment must first be discussed and acted on, and then the original motion amended.

#### **Reports:**

1. Reports are offered as a means of officially communicating information, activities, proposals, or other matters to the body, usually from an officer or a committee.
2. The moderator shall establish the sequence of reports and their place in the meeting. Regular reports from church officers (clerk, treasurer, elders, deacons, etc.) should go first.
3. Reports should be reviewed by the body by means of a motion to receive or accept and be included in the church minutes.
4. Action arising from a report must be considered by means of a motion, whether offered by the person responsible for the report or another member of the body.
5. A report containing actions or activities accomplished on behalf of the body should be affirmed by the body. If not affirmed, then other action required of the committee or individual sponsoring the report should be situated by motion or other means.

#### **Member Voting:**

1. After a motion, a second, and discussion, the moderator will put the motion to a vote. First, voting will take place by those in favor of the motion, then by those opposed to the motion. After the vote, the moderator will then announce whether the motion is "carried" or "lost."
2. All Voting shall be done by raising the hand or a "yes" and "no" vote.
3. The Clerk will record the decision in the minutes of the church.
4. The moderator should not vote unless the members are equally divided. In such case, the moderator would be expected to vote but is not obligated to do so.

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### **Article 13- Marriage Policy:**

Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, this Church will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, the officers and any member of this church shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of the Church or those facilities being rented or used by the church shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Gen 1:26-27.) Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Gen 2:18-25.) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4.) 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 any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10).

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Grace Baptist Church of Cook County, GA as a local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22).

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the church.

We believe that to carry on the religious mission of the church, to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons who associate with the church as members should abide by and agree to the above statements and conduct themselves in accordance with them.

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### **Article 14 – Sanctity of Life**

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Ps 139). However, we do believe that civil government has the right to exercise the death penalty if persons are found guilty of a crime for which death is the sentence.

### **Article 15 –Dissolution**

If three fourths of the members present at any members' meeting should agree on the intent to dissolve this church, then such intent shall be announced from the pulpit for two consecutive Sunday morning services prior to the next regularly scheduled members' meeting. If three fourths of the members present at the said members' meeting agree to dissolve the church, then all debts and accounts shall be settled and paid in full from the church funds. All remaining monies and property shall be given to the Southern Baptist Convention and designated to be used by the Lottie Moon Christmas offering. All accounts shall be closed once all assets have been disbursed. No officer or member shall receive any funds, property, or any other asset from the church in the event that it should be dissolved.

### **Article 16 - Amendments**

This constitution may be amended. However, an announcement informing the people of the intent to amend the constitution must be made from the pulpit for three consecutive Lord's Day Worship meetings prior to the meeting. This constitution may be amended upon three fourths of the members present at any Members' meeting provided that such amendment does not violate the Word of God, the Church Charter, the Church Covenant, or the Articles of Faith.

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## Article 17: Sample Yearly Church Budget Form

<u>Item</u>	<u>Previous Year</u>	<u>Upcoming Year</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Mell Baptist Missions			
Cooperative Program			
Lottie Moon / Armstrong			
Other Missions			
Crisis Pregnancy Centers			
Deaf Ministry			
Guest Speakers			
Elder's Salary			
Other Salaries			
Housing Allowances			
Minister's Retirement			
Book Allowance			
Auto Expenses			
Health Insurance			
Church Utilities			
Phone & Internet,			
Insurance			
Pest control			
Lawn Service			
SBC Convention Expenses			
GBC Convention Expenses			
Other Convention Expenses			
Literature			
Sunday School			
Vacation Bible School			
Visual Aids			
Library			
Trips			
Marketing			
Music			
Office Equipment			
Nursery Supplies			
Postage			
Flowers			
Cleaning supplies			
Ordinances Expenses			
Repairs			
Building fund			
Mortgage Loans			
Other			
<b><u>TOTALS</u></b>			