

CONSTITUTION

GRACE COVENANT CHURCH OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

ARTICLE I—NAME

The name of this church shall be Grace Covenant Church of Austin, Texas.

ARTICLE II—PURPOSE

The purpose of Grace Covenant Church is to glorify God by leading people to Christ and presenting each believer mature in Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:27-28).

In order to accomplish this purpose, we shall, through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, equip the believer to be obedient to God through vital, personal and corporate experiences:

1. With Him (prayer, praise, worship)
(Matthew 22:37; Psalm 63:1-6)
2. In His Word (preaching, teaching, Bible study, memorization, meditation)
(Romans 10:17; Colossians 3:16; II Timothy 3:16-17, 4:2)
3. With one another (fellowship and the one-anothers)
(John 13:34-35; Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 10:24-25)
4. In evangelism (training, sending, going)
(John 13:34-35, 17:24; Acts 1:8; I Peter 3:15)

ARTICLE III—DOCTRINE

A. Statement of Doctrine

1. The Holy Scriptures

We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired Word of God. Inspiration is God's superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the original autographs. All Scriptures are authoritative and without error in any category of knowledge, including science and history, and are of supreme and final authority in all matters about which they speak. We believe the Scriptures are to be interpreted in a literal and normal way. This means to consider history, grammar, context, and harmony with other Scriptures as guidelines for interpretation. We believe that the Holy Spirit guides the believer to understand the Bible. We believe that God's revelation to man is complete, and that He speaks to man primarily through the Scriptures. (Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 22:18-19)

2. The Godhead

We believe in one Triune God, existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, eternal in being, identical in essence, equal in power and glory and having the same attributes and perfection. (Deuteronomy 6:4; II Corinthians 13:14)

3. The Alienated Condition of Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, became alienated from God, and is totally unable without God's grace to regain its former position. (Genesis 1:26, 3:1-24; Romans 3:23, 5:12; Ephesians 2:12)

4. The Person and Work of Christ

We believe that the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. We believe that He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice. We believe that our redemption and salvation is guaranteed to us by His literal physical resurrection from the dead. (John 1:1, 14, 18; Luke 1:35; Romans 3:24-26, 4:25)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God, where, as His people's High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of intercession and advocacy. (Hebrews 1:3, 3:1, 7:23-25, 9:24, 12:2; I John 2:1-2)

5. The Personality of the Holy Spirit

We believe the Holy Spirit is a person who convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. He also, in the present age, regenerates believers in Christ, baptizes them into the church, the body of Christ, indwells them permanently, seals them unto the day of redemption, bestows spiritual gifts upon each one, and fills those yielded to Him. (John 3:8, 14:16, 15:26-27, 16:7-15; I Corinthians 12:4-11, 13; Ephesians 4:30, 5:18)

6. Salvation

We believe that salvation is a gift of God in grace and is received by man through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7, 2:8)

7. The Eternal Security of the Believer

We believe that all those who have genuinely put their trust in Christ as Savior and Lord have become new creations in Christ and are kept eternally secure by the power of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Jesus Christ. (John 10:27-30; Romans 8:1, 29-30, 38-39; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; I Peter 1:5)

8. The Church

- a. We believe that the Church is the universal bride and body of Christ. This body is composed of all "born again" believers in Christ regardless of denominational affiliation or church membership. (I Corinthians 12:4-27; Ephesians 1:22, 5:23-30)
- b. We believe that the local church is an assembly of professed believers in Jesus Christ who have the privilege and responsibility to voluntarily join together in one locality for the purpose of equipping each believer to be obedient to God through vital, personal and corporate experiences: with Him, in His Word, with one another, and in evangelism.

- c. We believe that the local church is God's primary means of leading people to Christ and presenting each believer mature in Christ. (Matthew 16:18-19, 28:18-20; Acts 2:37-47)
- d. We believe that the Lord Jesus instituted the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper to be observed by all believers until His return. (Matthew 28:19-20; I Corinthians 11:23-26)

9. The Second Coming of Christ

We believe in the personal imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His own, the Church, and His subsequent premillennial return to earth to set up His kingdom. (Zechariah 14:4-11; I Thessalonians 1:9-10, 4:13-18; Revelation 20:6)

10. The Eternal State

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all persons. Believers are to be resurrected to enjoy eternal life with God and unbelievers to experience judgment and then eternal suffering apart from God. (John 5:28-29; I Corinthians 15:52; I Thessalonians 4:16; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:4-6, 21:1-8)

11. The Responsibility of Believers

We believe that all believers should seek to walk by the Spirit, not bringing reproach upon their Lord and Savior, and that separation from sinful pleasures and practices is commanded by God. (Romans 12:1-2; II Corinthians 6:14, 7:1; Galatians 5:16, 25)

We believe that it is the obligation of every believer to witness by life and by word to the truths of Holy Scripture and to seek to proclaim the gospel to all the world. (Acts 1:8)

We believe that it is the responsibility of all believers to remember the work of the Lord in prayer and to support it with their means as the Lord has prospered them. (I Corinthians 16:2)

We believe that Scripture teaches that the local church shall have the priority in our giving. (Acts 2:37-47; I Corinthians 9:11, 16:1-2)

B. Covenant of Fellowship

By the help of the Holy Spirit, we covenant:

- 1. To walk together in Christian love;
- 2. To exercise Christian care and watchfulness over one another;
- 3. To pray with and for one another, sharing our burdens, sorrow, and joys;
- 4. To be thoughtful and courteous to one another, to be slow to take offense, and to be quick to forgive and to seek forgiveness;
- 5. To guard the spiritual and scriptural purity, peace and prosperity of the Church and its growth in scriptural knowledge and godliness;
- 6. To assist, as the Lord enables, in the work of the Church, and to promote its usefulness as a witness to the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus;

7. To contribute, as the Lord directs, to the financial support of the church, the relief of the needy, and the evangelization of all peoples;
8. To love and to pray for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ;
9. To engage regularly in personal Bible reading and prayer, and to establish family devotions where possible;
10. To bring up such children as may be entrusted to our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;
11. 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 lusts;
12. To endeavor by example, by word and by prayer to win others to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

ARTICLE IV—MEMBERSHIP

A. Qualifications for Membership

1. Each applicant for membership must adhere to the doctrine statement of Grace Covenant Church.
2. Each applicant is asked to read and assent to the commitments enumerated in the Covenant of Fellowship. Also, each membership applicant is asked to read this Constitution so as to understand this church's basis of belief and teaching, as well as its organizational procedures. Any questions concerning an applicant's qualifications for membership shall be reviewed by the Elders before acceptance and be dealt with on an individual basis.
3. Each applicant is asked to meet with at least two Elders or their designees to state that personal faith has been placed in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. *(rev. 3/07)*

Although baptism is not a requirement for admission into fellowship in the church, those who have not yet been immersed as believers are urged to do so.

B. Receiving Members

As many as have met with at least two Elders or their designees, and have assented to the qualifications for membership, shall be received into membership of this church by the Elders at such time as may be determined by them. *(rev. 3/07)*

C. Associate Membership

Applicants who desire to retain their membership in another church outside the city may be admitted into the membership of this church in the same manner as is prescribed above. Such members shall possess the same rights and privileges as regular members.

D. Inactive Members

Any member who has been absent from the church for a period of three months, without manifesting an interest by attending services of the church or by contributing to its support, may, on the recommendation of the Elders, be placed on the roll as an inactive member. Such members shall not be counted as regular members and shall have no rights of membership. When such a person begins to participate again, upon recommendation of the Elders, he may be restored to the active roll.

E. Voting Privileges of the Congregation

All active members who have attained the age of eighteen years shall have the right to vote as part of the congregation.

F. Discipline and Dismissal

Members may be dismissed from the rolls of the church in one of the following ways:

1. Those persons in good standing in the church who desire to withdraw in order to fellowship elsewhere, will, upon request, be given a letter commending them to other such Christian groups.
2. Inactive members who for more than one year fail to attend church services may be suspended from the membership of the church at the discretion of the Elders.
3. Anyone who evidences serious doctrinal aberration or nonconformity with the Covenant of Fellowship will be counseled by the Elders. Those persisting will be subject to such disciplinary action by the Elders as seems Scripturally appropriate. No charges by an individual shall be brought against any member of the church in a public meeting. All church actions concerning discipline must stem from the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE V—GOVERNMENT

A. Authority

The head of the church is Christ. We believe that He makes His headship and leadership known through men that He chooses and equips to carry on the spiritual oversight of His work. Therefore, the spiritual leadership and administrative government of this church shall be vested in the Board of Elders (who shall be elected by the church). The Board's actions shall be subject to review by the church at any constitutionally-called business meeting.

All Elders must be active members of the church and in good standing, showing evidence of established Christian character. They shall give unreserved assent to the doctrinal statement of the church and its Covenant of Fellowship. They shall be men of mature Christian experience who shall meet the requirements as set forth in I Timothy, chapter three. No one, except the Senior Pastor, shall be elected as an elder who has not been a member of the church for at least one year. *(revised 7/95)*

A majority of the Elders shall constitute a quorum and official action shall require at least a majority vote of the members present.

The Board of Elders shall appoint all officers of the church. The Board of Elders shall be

the executive board of the church. The Elders, serving as trustees, shall have supervision over all church operations and transactions with power to act, except that it shall not encumber the church with loan, transfer, sale or purchase of any real estate except by authorization conveyed through a majority vote of the church membership present at a constitutionally called business meeting. The Board of Elders shall handle and consider suggestions, recommendations and grievances from, or upon the part of, any member or organization affiliated with the church.

The Senior Pastor shall serve continuously as an elder. Annually, other existing elders and potential new elders shall be nominated by the Board of Elders and elected by the members of the church. The length of service for elders shall be determined by the Board of Elders. The Boards of Elders shall ensure that each elder meets, on a continuing basis, the biblical and Grace Covenant Church qualifications and requirements. *(rev. 3/07)*

B. Meetings for Business

The church shall hold the following meetings for business: the regular meeting and special meetings. Special meetings may be called by the Board of Elders following any regular meeting of the church or at any other convenient time. When the business at hand concerns the buying or selling of church property, or the filling of an elective office, announcement of such meeting shall be made for two Sundays prior to the date of the meeting.

All congregational voting will be determined by secret ballot.

No business shall be conducted without a quorum consisting of ten percent (10%) of the voting membership of the church. A majority vote of the members present shall be required to transact any business.

ARTICLE VII—PROPERTY RIGHTS

The title to real property of the church shall be in the name of the church or three or more members of the Board of Elders as trustees for the church, and no member or groups of members shall have any individual property rights in the assets of the church.

In the event that the church is dissolved, the property shall be sold and all proceeds, above liabilities, shall be given to missions receiving support from the church, each of which shall have, at the time, a valid and subsisting exemption from federal income tax, issued by the Internal Revenue Service.

ARTICLE VII—AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended, modified or rescinded by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the qualified members present at any regular or special meeting for business, provided that due notice is given that such action is to be introduced at such meeting. For purposes of this article, due notice shall consist of not less than a public announcement for two Sundays and the posting of the proposed amendment in a conspicuous place at least one week prior to said meeting.

7/95: Article V, Section A, Paragraph 2

10/97: Article VI

grace Vision

Transformed by God's Grace

- We are a people whose lives are radically changed by the grace and love of God.

Connected through Relationships

We are a community connected to each other by building and restoring relationships.

Committed to Service

We are a church committed to caring for others and bringing them the good news of Jesus Christ.

Mission

Because we are being transformed by God's Grace...

- We will commit to co-labor with God to develop fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.
- We will help each other grow in knowledge and wisdom through disciplined study of the Bible, so that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can live as God has called us to live.
- We will remember the love and grace God has shown us through individual and corporate prayer and worship, so that we will give honor and glory to God in all we do.

Because we are connected through relationships...

- We will speak the truth in love, holding each other accountable for the health of our souls and the unity of our community of believers.
- We will actively reflect the love of Christ to people around us, seeking to address their physical, emotional and spiritual needs.
- We will seek to bring healing and restore peace to broken relationships, through confession and forgiveness.

Because we are committed to service...

- We will follow Christ's example, by caring for others and bringing them the good news of Jesus Christ in all our places of influence – at home, at work, at school, at church, in our neighborhoods and communities, and wherever we go around the world.
- We are committed to serve publically and privately; individually, in small groups, and as a church united; regularly, spontaneously, and exhaustively.
- We will expect each other to serve; encourage each other to serve; and humbly celebrate together the joy that results from our service.



Loving God—with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength

- We worship an awesome God ...
 - a God who is worthy of our praise ...
 - a God whose supremacy is certain ...
 - a God we can know and love ...
 - a God who has revealed Himself to us in the Bible.
- Because of our love for God, we will be obedient to His commands to pray, to love others, and to spend time with Him in His Word. We will strive to become more like Jesus Christ, by passionately following Him and by allowing the indwelling Holy Spirit to reveal daily the person and character of Christ in us to the world around us, as we die to our selfish nature.
- Ultimate truth is revealed in the Bible. It is unlike any other book. It is the Word of God. It is a love letter written to each of us. We will treasure it. We will honor its words. We will heed its call on our lives. We will proclaim it wherever we go.

Loving others—our neighbors as ourselves

- Because He first loved us, we will seek to develop and maintain loving, caring and honest relationships in all aspects of our lives, both inside and outside the church, including marriage relationships, parent and child relationships, work relationships, and friendships.
- Our love for God compels us to share the good news of Jesus Christ to the world around us – in our families, in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods, in our city, across our country, and to the uttermost parts of the world.
- In loving obedience to God’s commands, we will step out in faith – knowing that every believer is called to be a minister – to exercise the gifts the Lord has given us to serve the poor, the widows, the orphans and the community and world around us with tenderness, passion and humility.