

**Church Constitution**  
**Grace Reformed Church**

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# CONSTITUTION OF GRACE REFORMED CHURCH

Unanimously adopted in a regular meeting of the members of Grace Reformed Church on  
7 January 2024.

## **Preamble**

*Jesus Christ, as King, has given to His Church officers, oracles, and ordinances; and has ordained His system of doctrine, government, discipline, and worship, all of which are either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary inference may be deduced from it; and to which things He commands that nothing be added nor subtracted. This constitution shall preserve and secure these principles and govern this body in accordance with God's Holy Word and shall contain enduring ecclesiastical matters related to Grace Reformed Church. (Deut 12:29-32; Mal 1:6-13; Mtt 15:9; John 4:23-24; 1 Cor 4:6; 1 Pet 2:4-5)*

## **Article I. Name**

The name of this church shall be Grace Reformed Church.

## **Article II. Purpose**

The purpose of Grace Reformed Church is to glorify God by establishing a body of believers whose greatest desire is to fulfill the two great commandments—loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. This is done by striving to live in obedience to Holy Scripture, the faithful preaching and teaching of God's Word, practicing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, worshipping God in corporate worship as prescribed by His Word, praying for one another and for the world, encouraging one another through the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, ministering to the needs of the saints and the lost, and seeking to advance God's kingdom in the world through the proclaiming of the gospel. (Dt. 12:29-32; Mtt. 22:36-40; 26:26-29; 28:19-20; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22:14-23; Jn. 14:15; Acts 4:32-37; 1 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:18-21; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; 3:14-15; 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:1-2)

## **Article III. Confessional Standards**

The confessional standard for Grace Reformed Church shall be the First London Baptist Confession of Faith (1646). No position statement or point of doctrine may in anywise contradict the church confessional standard.

## **Article IV. Structure**

**Section 1. Headship:** The Lord Jesus Christ is the sole Head and ultimate Pastor of the Church in both its universal and local expressions. As the Head of the Church, all direction, guidance, control, and authority come from and eternally reside in Him. (Eph 1:22, 23; Col 1:18; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 5:4)

**Section 2. Polity:** The government is vested in the body of believers who compose its membership. The membership exercises their governing power through those whom Christ has qualified for the church office of Elder to govern and make decisions on behalf of the membership.

Christ is the head of this Grace Reformed Church. In any growing congregation, there will be people at all stages of spiritual growth and maturity. For that reason, it is not the purpose of the church to do the will of the majority, but the will of God.

Any disputes that arise over the interpretation of this Constitution, Bylaws, doctrine, or matters of faith, shall be deferred to the highest ecclesiastical authority of this church. In this case, it would be the Lead Elder, with the advice of the Associate Elders. (Mtt 18:15-17; Acts 1:23-26; 6:2-3; 13:1-3; 14:23; 15:22; 20:28; 1 Cor 5:4-5; Eph 4:11)

**Section 3. Authority:** The supreme source of authority regarding all matters of faith and practice shall be the Holy Scriptures as contained in the sixty-six books of the Bible. *Of the Old Testament:* Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. *Of the New Testament:* Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, I, II, & III John, Jude, Revelation. (Deut 8:3; 12:32; Mtt 4:4; Lk 11:49-51; Acts 5:29; 20:29-30; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Jude 1:3)

**Section 4. Worship:** Since the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the principles of public worship must be derived from the Bible, and from no other source. Minimally, the Bible teaches the following are proper elements of public worship: reading of Holy Scripture, singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the offering of prayer, the preaching of the Word, the collection of tithes and offerings, and observing the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. (Deut 12:29-32; Mtt 15:8-9; Jn 4:23-24; Acts 2:42; 20:7 [cf. 1 Cor 10:16; 11:20-26]; 1 Cor 4:6; 16:2; Eph 5:18-19; Col 3:16; 1 Tim 2:1; 2 Tim 4:1-2)

**Section 5. Doctrine:** The Elder(s), as appointed leader(s) of the church, shall confirm and defend the doctrine and governing documents of this church under the direction of the Holy Spirit, guided by the Word of God, and in agreement with the First London Baptist Confession of Faith (1646). The purpose of adhering to a historic doctrinal statement is to protect the local assembly by more precisely setting forth the doctrine of this church so that the church might be of one common faith true to His inspired Word. (Acts 15:2, 6, 23; 20:17, 28-32; Eph 4:11-14; 1 Thes 5:12-13; 1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 4:1-4; Titus 1:9; Heb 13:17)

**Section 6. Cooperation:** Grace Reformed Church shall be subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body but recognizes the benefits of mutual counsel and cooperation with churches and associations of like faith and practice and reserves the right to engage in such counsel and cooperation. Any voluntary associations with other bodies shall not infringe on the autonomy of this Church. (Acts 11:27-30; 15:1-2; 21:17-19; Rom 15:22-33; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:1-5; 9:1-5; Phil 4:14-16)

**Section 7. Church and State:** Grace Reformed Church shall operate in accordance with federal and state laws, and the handling of property shall be in accordance with such laws. Adherence to

federal and state laws shall be described in the Bylaws. This section shall be subservient to Article IV, Sections 1-6. (Luke 20:22-25; Acts 4:19-20; 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Tim 2:1-2)

## **Article V. Elders**

**Section 1.** The elders are the primary officers of the church. They are equipped by the Holy Spirit, evidence their divine qualifications by doing the work of an elder and are recognized as elders by the membership of the congregation. The number of elders is determined by the number God raises up and grants the necessary spiritual gifts to fulfill the office. The office of elder is limited to men. (Acts 14:23; 15:2, 6, 22-23; 20:17, 28; Eph 4:11; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5, 7ff.; 1 Pet 5:1-3)

The Lead Elder (Senior Pastor) shall be the regular preaching pastor and shall have the responsibility of setting the visionary and theological direction for the church within the boundaries of the church's confessional standard and governing documents. (1 Tim. 1:2-3, 18; 4:6, 11-13; 5:17, 21-22; 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:1-2, 14; 4:1-2; Titus 1:4-5; 2:2)

Associate Elders assist the Senior Pastor in the performance of ministry within the church. They support and promote the visionary and theological direction of the Lead Elder. After two years of ministry, determined by date of appointment, Associate Elders shall take a one-year sabbatical (12 months) from all elder related ministries. Associate elders must be invited back by unanimous consent of the Elder Board. Upon his return from sabbatical, Associate Elders shall reaffirm his ordination vows before the congregation at a members meeting or special meeting. (Ex. 3:16; 12:21; 1 Tim 1:2-3; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:14 cf. Acts 20:17; Rev. 1:20; 2:1)

Decisions made by the elder board shall be based on unanimity. The Lead Elder reserves the right to table any discussion.

Texas state law requires a minimum of three directors and a president to operate as a nonprofit corporation. In Grace Reformed Church, the Elders are the board of directors, and the president of the corporation shall be the Senior Pastor.

Staff elders and lay elders: Staff elders are those elders who are given remuneration for their ministry to the church. Lay elders are volunteer elders.

**Section 2. Responsibilities:** Elders are responsible for:

- a. Guarding and defending the doctrine and governing documents of the church and overseeing the life and organization of the congregation. (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess 5:12-13; 2 Tim 1:13-14; Heb 13:17; James 5:14)
- b. Feeding the sheep of God, for whom the Holy Spirit has made them overseers, by means of the teaching and preaching of the Word of God. (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 5:17; 1 Pet 5:1-4; Heb 13:7)
- c. Giving themselves to prayer for the congregation and visitation of the sick. (Acts 6:2-4; James 5:14)
- d. Receiving, disciplining, and dismissing members. (Mtt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:1-5)
- e. Meeting at least monthly for prayer, planning, and decision-making.

**Section 3. Qualifications.** The qualifications of an elder are as follows:

- f. Scriptural standards: Those who aspire to the office of Elder must meet the standards set forth in 1 Tim 2:12; 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
- g. Spiritual gifts: The minimum spiritual gifts necessary for accomplishing the work of an elder are teaching, leadership, and administration. (Rom 12:8; 1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:9; 1 Cor 12:28)
- h. Agreement: Elder candidates must be in agreement with the church's confession of faith and governing documents. (Acts 15:36-41, cf. 13:13)

**Section 4. Appointment.** To be appointed as an elder, a candidate must:

- i. Meet the qualifications in Article V, Section 3
- j. Be nominated by the Elder(s) of the church. (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5)
- k. Complete elder training as determined by the elder(s). (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9; Heb 13:17; James 3:1)
- l. Complete an oral theological examination by the Elder(s) regarding the questions in the Eldership Questionnaire. (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9; Heb 13:17; James 3:1)
- m. Deliver two (2) sermons to the congregation within thirty (30) days of each other. (1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 4:1-2; Titus 1:9)
- n. Complete a Question-and-Answer session before the voting members. (Acts 6:3; 15:22; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7)
- o. Receive at least a 4/5 majority vote of a quorum of the voting members of the church at a members meeting or special meeting considering his candidacy. (Acts 6:3; 15:22; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7)
- p. Publicly take ordination vows before the membership of the church during their ordination service.

### **Section 5. Termination**

A lay or staff elder may be relieved of duty for the following reasons: voluntary termination, church discipline after the elders and congregation clearly and transparently completed the steps of Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Tim 5:19 (see Article VIII, Sec. 7), mental incapacitation, physical death, or removal by the Senior Pastor.

The Senior Pastor may be relieved of duty with a vote of "no confidence" by a vote of 2/3 majority of a quorum of the voting members of the church at a scheduled members meeting or special meeting. Procedures for removing the Senior Pastor by vote of "no confidence" shall be described and strictly adhered to in the Bylaws. (Mtt 18:15-17; Gal 6:1; Col 3:16; 2 Thes 3:14-15; 1 Tim 5:19-20)

It is the prerogative of the Elder who is also a staff elder to dissolve his responsibilities to the church by giving at least thirty (30) days notice to the Elder(s). It is the prerogative of the Lead Elder to accept resignations immediately.

Termination: In the event of a staff member's abrupt termination by the Elder(s) as a result of that staff member's malfeasance, the Elder(s) may continue the staff member's salary for up to one (1) month after the effective date of termination. If no malfeasance is involved, the Elder(s) may

continue the staff member's salary for up to six (6) months after the effective date of termination. (Matt 7:12; 22:39)

**Section 6. Compensation:** The church shall provide adequate remuneration to those who provide pulpit ministry and to those who contribute significant time to the ministry of the church. (Mtt 10:9-10; 1 Cor 9:7-14; Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 5:17-18)

The salary and benefits package of those who provide pulpit ministry and who contribute significant time to the ministry of the church shall be determined by the Elder(s), reviewed and revised as appropriate, and approved at a members meeting or special meeting by a simple majority vote of a quorum. (Acts 2:44-45; 11:29-30)

The salary and benefits package of those engaged in part-time ministry shall be pro-rated as determined by the Elder(s), reviewed and revised as appropriate, and approved at a members meeting or special meeting by a simple majority of a quorum. (Acts 2:44-45; 11:29-30)

## **Article VI. Deacons**

**Section 1.** Deacons assist the Elders in the performance of ministry in the church. Their responsibilities are primarily in the area of physical ministry, freeing the elders for spiritual ministry. The office of deacon is limited to men. (Acts 6:1-6)

**Section 2. Qualifications.** The qualifications of a deacon are as follows:

- a. Scriptural standards: Those who aspire to the office of Deacon must meet the standards set forth in 1 Tim 3:8-13.
- b. Spiritual gifts: The spiritual gifts needed for deacons are those in the general category of service and administration. (1 Peter 4:11; Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28)
- c. Membership: Deacon candidates must be male voting members of the church. (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim 3:11, 12)
- d. Agreement: Deacon candidates must be in agreement with the church confession of faith, constitution, and governing documents. (Acts 15:36-41, cf. 13:13)

**Section 3. Tenure.** After two years of ministry, determined by date of appointment, deacons shall take a one-year sabbatical (12 months) from all deacon related ministries. Deacons must be invited back by unanimous consent of the Elder Board. Upon his return from sabbatical, the deacon shall reaffirm his ordination vows before the congregation at a members meeting or special meeting.

**Section 4. Appointment:** To be appointed as a deacon, a candidate must:

- e. Meet the qualifications in Article VI, Section 2.
- f. Be nominated by the Elder(s). (Acts 6:2-6; 20:28; Heb 13:17)
- g. Complete deacon training as determined by the elder(s). (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:9; Heb 13:17)
- h. Receive an approving vote by a 3/4 majority of a quorum of the church at a members meeting or special meeting considering his candidacy. (Acts 6:3; 15:22)
- i. Publicly take ordination vows before the membership of the church during their ordination service.

**Section 5. Termination:** A deacon may be relieved of his duties for the following reasons: voluntary termination, removal by the collective elders or removal by the Senior Pastor.

**Section 6. Responsibilities:** Deacons are responsible for:

- j. Ministering to the physical needs of the congregation. (Acts 6:1-6)
- k. Accounting for, supplying, and maintaining the material interests of the church (such as buildings, land, physical property, etc.), and making recommendations to the Elders in such matters.
- l. Superintending church finances in accordance with the Bylaws.
- m. Overseeing administrative functions of the church (such as greeters, Lord's Supper preparation, offertory, etc.).
- n. Assisting in the spiritual work and growth of the church.
- o. Meeting at least monthly for prayer and planning.

## **Article VII. Governance**

**Section 1. Advisory Board:** In the absence of a plurality of elders, the sole elder shall appoint no less than three (3) male members of the church to serve as an Advisory Board and as assistants to the Elder. Board members shall be re-appointed annually with no term limits. Board members shall serve at the discretion of the Elder with a simple majority vote of a quorum of the congregation. The Advisory Board shall disband upon the appointment of a second elder. (Prov 11:14; 15:22; Acts 18:24-26; Rom 13:1; Gal 2:11-14)

**Section 2. Additional Staff:** The church shall have additional paid and volunteer staff as wisdom and the Holy Spirit may direct as necessary for the carrying on of the work of the church. Such staff shall be appointed and serve at the discretion of the Elder(s).

**Section 3. Order of Succession:** In the event the church is lacking elders, the deacons shall assume charge of the church with the most senior deacon, not on Sabbatical, filling the role of lead deacon. In the event the church is without deacons, the five (5) most senior male members of the church, determined by date of membership, shall form an Oversight Committee and oversee the church until such time an elder can be appointed.

## **Article VIII. Membership**

**Section 1. General:** The membership shall consist of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The principle practiced at this church is to accept into membership all those whom Christ has accepted. Church membership is required for those involved in church ministry (guest ministry excepting) and for active participation in members meetings or special meetings. (Mtt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:1-5; 12:12-13, 2 Thes 3:6, 14)

**Section 2. Requirements:** Conversion and baptism based on one's own profession of faith are prerequisite to the privileges of church membership. Those who are believers in Christ but have not been baptized shall be requested to do so when joining the church. Those who have been baptized as believers, though the mode of baptism was not immersion, will not be required to be re-baptized, since the New Testament only recognizes one baptism for believers. Those who have been baptized as infants in an Evangelical church and sincerely subscribe to paedobaptism, who desire to join as members, shall be admitted based on a credible profession of faith, but may not



hold the position of elder, deacon or Bible teacher. (1 Cor 12:27; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:35-39; Eph 4:4-5; Mt 28:19; Acts 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:14-15; 16:33; 18:8).

**Section 3. Acceptance:** Any person desiring to become a member of this church shall be interviewed by two elders to determine a credible profession of faith and baptism. In the absence of two elders, the interview shall be conducted by one elder and one deacon or one elder and a member of the Advisory Board. The interviewers shall inquire into the applicant's profession of faith, baptism, and other pertinent matters as determined by the elder(s), then report their findings to the elder board. If the applicant is or has been a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine the person's standing in that church and his or her reasons for leaving. Upon approval by the elder(s), the new member shall be announced to the church body during a Sunday worship service. (Matt 18:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 5:2, 5, 11; Heb 13:17)

**Section 4. Responsibilities:** Members are expected to live a life worthy of the gospel calling, to submit to the Elder(s), to be faithful in all duties essential to the Christian life, to attend the services of this church, to give of their finances for its support and cause, and to share in its organized work. (Mtt 10:9-10; Acts 11:27-30; Rom 12:1-15:13; 15:22-29; 1 Cor 9:7-14; 12:7; 12:12-31; 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:9-15; 9:6-11; Gal 6:6; Eph 4:1-3; 1 Thes 5:12-13; 1 Tim 5:17-18; Heb 10:24-25; 13:7, 17; James 2:14-26; 1 Pet 4:8-11)

**Section 5. Membership of children:** Children of members will be considered under their parents' authority for membership purposes until they reach the age of eighteen (18) or upon entering into marriage or the United States military. (Ex 20:12; Luke 2:51; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20)

**Section 6. Termination:** Church membership shall be terminated for the following reasons:

1. Physical death
2. Voluntary termination
3. Transfer of membership to another evangelical church
4. Relocation, after six (6) months have lapsed without contact
5. Disciplinary dismissal

Any person who has been terminated as a church member shall be notified of this action in writing.

**Section 7. Church Discipline:** Church members who fall into moral or doctrinal error may be subject to church discipline. Church discipline may be brought upon a church member for objective, unrepentant, and continuous moral sin or propagation of doctrine or practices contrary to the statement of faith or position statements. The purpose of church discipline is to effect a return to a biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs, to maintain purity in the local Church, and to deter sin. The biblical process of church discipline is:

1. Private rebuke by a member of the church (Mt 18:15)
2. Private rebuke by two or more members of the church (Mt 18:16)
3. Public rebuke before the church body, carried out by the Elders (Mt 18:17)
4. Excommunication from the Lord's Supper and church membership, carried out by the Elders (Mt 18:17b; 1 Cor 5:1-13; 1 Tim 1:19-20)

NOTE: Excommunication from the Lord's Supper and dismissal from church membership does not necessarily mean the disciplined person is not saved. However, excommunication should serve as a solemn admonition for those individuals to examine themselves to see if they are in the faith. Unrepentance shall be the sole cause for excommunication.

Private rebukes must be done in person. Public rebukes must be done in person before the congregation. No matters of church discipline regarding any member of the church may be disseminated to the congregation via conventional mail, electronic communication (i.e., email, text messaging, social media posts, etc.) or telecommunication methods.

All matters of church discipline must be thoroughly documented by the elder(s) showing that specific meetings regarding the specific matter of discipline has been ongoing for an extensive period of time. (See articles XLII, XLIII, and XLIV of the 1646 First London Baptist Confession)

Membership may be restored to any person previously excluded, upon request of the excluded person, and upon evidence of the excluded person's repentance and reformation. This should be done in the Spirit of forgiveness and love (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

### **Article IX. Meetings**

**Section 1.** Worship Meetings: The church body shall meet each Sunday for the worship of God, our Creator, and for edifying the Saints through preaching, teaching, fellowship, prayer, exhortation, collection of offerings, administering of the Sacraments, and discipline. (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2; Eph 4:11, 12; 2 Tim 4:1, 2)

**Section 2.** Members Meetings: Members meetings are a means for both the leadership and the voting membership of the church to exercise their responsibilities to govern the church in accordance with Scripture. Members meetings may only be attended by voting church members. Members must be physically present to vote or otherwise participate in members or special meetings. Members meetings shall be held during the months of February and August.

**Section 3.** Special Meetings: The purpose of special meetings is to conduct business that would not or could not be conducted at a scheduled members meeting or cannot be postponed until the next scheduled members meeting.

**Section 4.** Voting: Members will vote on the appointment of Elder, Deacons, and Advisory Board members, the adoption of an annual budget, changes to the Church Constitution and Bylaws, major building projects or expenditures (determined by the elders), the removal of the Lead Elder, and the dissolution of the church.

This is a limited voting membership church. Each church member shall be entitled to one vote as a member of this church on approved issues. Voting in this church is limited to those individuals that have been fully accepted into membership and whose status as a church member is active.

Voting members are those adult members who have been admitted into full fellowship, having met the requirements of Article VIII, Sections 1-3.

**Section 5.** Elders Meetings: There shall be regular Elders meetings. Seeking the Lord's wisdom and blessing through thankful prayer shall be a part of every meeting. A quorum shall be understood to be more than 50% of the Elders. Elders' meetings may not be conducted without the Senior Pastor. Elders shall not hold private informal meetings amongst themselves to discuss church business and ministry needs outside of scheduled Elders meetings. Affirming that God's will is never divided, all decisions shall be made prayerfully, humbly, and on a unanimous basis. At any regular or special Elders' meeting, Church officers may be chosen and positions filled as needed, if all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.

**Section 6.** Members meetings and special meetings may only be called by the elder(s) of the church with not less than five (5) calendar days' notice to all members of the congregation.

**Section 7.** Quorum: A quorum shall be 1/3 of the voting membership of the church or 10 members, whichever is greater. A quorum shall be required at all Members meetings and special meetings.

**Section 8.** Minutes: Minutes shall be recorded at all meetings held by the church or within the church regarding any ministry which pertains to the church.

#### **Article X. Amendments**

**Section 1.** Any member of the church may propose an amendment to the Constitution by submitting the proposed amendment in writing to the Elder(s) for review and approval. Upon approval by the Elder(s), the proposed amendment must be approved by 3/5 majority vote of a quorum at a scheduled members meeting or special meeting.

**Section 2.** This constitution may only be amended. It shall not be altered.

**Section 3.** This constitution shall not be amended in a way which contradicts the church confession of faith or position statements.

#### **Article XI. Dissolution**

In the event the church should dissolve, all liquid and material assets shall be donated to the ecclesiastical association of which the church maintains her membership. If the church is not a member of an association, then all liquid and material assets shall be donated to a nationally recognized not-for-profit organization which stands in the tradition of the 1646 or 1689 London Baptist Confessions of Faith.