



CONSTITUTION AND DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Grace Life Fellowship

Preamble

We, the members of GRACE LIFE FELLOWSHIP, a denominationally unaffiliated church, do establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves. This document, taken as a whole, is considered the Constitution that includes the Doctrine. Article III, taken separately, is considered the Doctrinal Statement.

Article I

Name

The name of the church shall be GRACE LIFE FELLOWSHIP

Article II

Purpose

1. To gather together to worship, praise and mature individually and as a church group in our personal relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit so as to realize love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
2. To teach the word of God primarily to believers so that they might be built up in the faith and equipped for the work of the ministry.
3. To minister by personal witnessing of God's grace and love to others and to allow others to minister to us.
4. To spread the gospel through our worship services and support of missionaries and organizations of like faith.
5. To meet for prayer and the administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Article III

Doctrine

This article is the doctrinal statement of GRACE LIFE FELLOWSHIP. It is not exhaustive and does not cover all the points of doctrine that can be established through the study of the Bible. Rather, it focuses on the central issues, i.e., those that are essential to finding and experiencing life with God through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

1. **THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.** We believe God inspired the Bible, including both the Old and New Testaments, in the original manuscripts. The individual writers, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote down in those original manuscripts the infallible, inerrant Word of God as a final and authoritative guide for faith and conduct.

2. **THE NATURE AND EXISTENCE OF GOD.** We believe in one God who eternally exists in three Persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

3. **THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST.** We believe Jesus Christ (God, the Son), who always existed, became a man (without diminishing His Deity) by birth through the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life and, as the infinite God-Man, took upon Himself the sins of all mankind, died in their place and satisfied God's holy wrath against their sin.

4. **THE HOLY SPIRIT.** We believe the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. As such, He is the Supernatural Agent in accomplishing our regeneration into life with God. He subsequently indwells believers to fill, empower, teach, and seal them until the day of redemption. He also baptizes every believer into the body of Jesus Christ - the Church.

5. **SATAN.** We believe Satan is a real created being, a fallen angel, who is the open and declared enemy of God and mankind. He is aided by a host of evil spirit beings called demons (other fallen angels), whose goal is to destroy believers, their families, and their churches. Though they are powerful and every believer is subject to their attack, victory over them is available through the person and work of Jesus Christ on the believer's behalf. They shall ultimately be removed and tormented forever in the Lake of Fire.

6. **THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MAN.** We believe man was created to be the image bearer of God, having been uniquely made in the image and likeness of God. In Adam's rebellion and sin, the human race was plunged into sin, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God. Mankind in this natural state is therefore totally depraved, which means that of himself, he is utterly unable to remedy his lost condition. Mankind's ultimate end in this lost state is eternal separation from God.

7. **SALVATION.** We believe man's salvation from his lost condition is the gift of God brought to man entirely by the grace of God apart from any work of man. It is received only by personal faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of sins. Upon placing faith in Jesus Christ, the believer receives eternal life

(Jesus Christ), thereby becoming a partaker of God's own life and is saved from his sins. He is now a new creation of God and has a new identity as a child of God (a saint.)

8. **THE ETERNAL SECURITY AND ASSURANCE OF BELIEVERS.** We believe all who have come to rely upon the work of Jesus Christ for their salvation will never lose this relationship. They are kept by God's power and are secure in Jesus Christ forever. This assurance rests upon the testimony of God in the Bible rather than upon feelings.

9. **SANCTIFICATION.** We believe that by placing their faith in Jesus, believers were united with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and enthronement. This does not mean the believer was atoning for his own sin, but that God in His grace provided through the cross of Jesus Christ for the death of the old man (Adamic heritage or sin nature). Man could now be raised up in Jesus Christ a brand new creation. For this to become an experiential reality, the believer must choose to walk by faith in dependence on the Holy Spirit, thereby subduing the flesh against which he now struggles and defeating the power of sin. Sanctification, then, is Jesus Christ living His life out through the believer, not the believer living his life for God. This is not teaching passivity, sinless perfection, co-atonement, the deification of man, or the eradication of the personality of man.

10. **HISTORICAL POSITION.** The following items, though not considered essential for salvation, fellowship, or membership, represent the historical position of Grace Life Fellowship.

A. **Future Things.** There will be a premillennial, pretribulation rapture of the church. Following the removal of the church from this world to be with Jesus Christ, the Anti-Christ will be revealed. There will then be a seven year period of tribulation on Earth, culminated by the return of the Jesus Christ with His church to Earth, at which time He will establish His millennial kingdom. Recognizing there are other interpretations of the future agenda of God, and that these are not essential elements of salvation, adherence to this position is not required for membership or fellowship at GRACE LIFE FELLOWSHIP.

B. **Spiritual Gifts.** The Holy Spirit has uniquely gifted each believer for service in the body of Jesus Christ and each believer should assume their role in the body in ministering their gifts. As for miracle sign gifts, detailed study of the Bible reveals the gifts will cease but does not reveal the time frame for this cessation. The historical position of GRACE LIFE FELLOWSHIP is that the miracle sign gifts have ceased, however, we are not willing to restrict the Holy Spirit working in the church through miracle sign gifts. However, it is expected that if these gifts were to be manifested, it would be done in accordance with the requirements of I Cor. 14. This would include the priority of love, the goal of serving others, and if a tongue were spoken there should be an interpreter present, etc. While being open to the working of the Holy Spirit in this assembly, it is our conviction that much of what is being seen elsewhere in the church today is not in accordance with I Cor. 12-14 and would therefore be rejected by the Elders. For a further

discussion of this often divisive and misunderstood issue, the Elders have prepared a position paper that is available through the church office.

Article IV

Membership

All are welcome to attend our services and enjoy fellowship with the congregation and with each other as long as their behavior is respectful. Official church membership shall be those so designated on the most current roster maintained in the church offices.

1. **REQUIREMENTS.** Formal membership is offered to those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior evidenced by a personal profession of faith and who accept the Constitution. Those desiring membership should make their desire known to the Pastor, any Elder or Deacon and fill out a New Member Application. A brief meeting with any two of the individuals listed above (Pastor, Elder or Deacon) to ensure understanding of these requirements completes the membership process.

2. **RECEIVING MEMBERS.** There is no limit to the number of members. New members will be introduced at the next church service.

3. **TERMINATION.** When an individual's membership is terminated, their name will be removed from the church roster.

A. **Withdrawal.** Any person who ceases active membership in the church, such as by joining another church, shall have terminated their membership in this church.

B. **Transfer.** Members shall be granted, upon written request, a letter of transfer.

C. **Removal.** A person may be removed from the membership of this church who holds heretical beliefs contrary to our doctrine or who would disturb the unity and peace of the church. This action shall be after due consideration by the Elders.

4. **DISCIPLINE.** It is the responsibility of all members to love each other enough to get involved in each other's lives, even to the point of dealing with each other's sin. This is not to be done in a detective type spirit, but with the goal of love and restoration. As led by the Holy Spirit, the offending individual should be lovingly confronted, after dealing with one's own sin first, as outlined in Matthew 7 - removing the log from our own eyes first, before seeking to remove the speck from another's eyes. If repentance is gained, the matter should remain private between the individuals involved. If a brother or sister refuses to repent of sin, the loving brother or sister should secure one or two others to now lovingly confront the offender with their failure to repent. If repentance is gained, the matter should remain private between the individuals involved. If the offender refuses to listen to the group of two or three, the matter should then be brought to the Elder's. Should they fail to win the offender to repentance, the matter will be told to the

church, for them to have opportunity to lovingly attempt to win the brother/sister from sin. Failure to secure this repentance will result in the removal of the offender from the membership of the church. The body will be informed to love the offender and continue to attempt to win them to repentance, upon which the offender may be returned to membership.

Article V

Government

This church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its head, the Holy Bible as its guide in the matter of faith, church order, and discipline and the Holy Spirit as its teacher. It is neither accountable to nor under the jurisdiction or supervision of any denominational body.

1. Authority in all church matters is vested in the Elders.
2. Authority is delegated to the Deacons by the Elders in other matters of spiritual ministry and material stewardship who will report to the Elders as required regarding actions in these areas.

Article VI

Administration

1. OFFICERS. The officers of the church shall normally consist of Elders, Pastor and Deacons
2. DUTY OF THE OFFICERS.
 - A. It shall be the duty of the Elders to oversee all church matters. It is their responsibility, as put forth in Acts, to protect and shepherd the church into the truth of the Bible under the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Pastor, in addition to his specific duties, shall also be an Elder. The Elders shall work with the Pastor in performing church functions such as counseling the needy, in comforting the afflicted and in visiting the sick. Elders also are responsible for arranging pulpit substitutes and the discipline and removal of members. The Elders shall appoint a church Treasurer and other positions as deemed necessary. The Elders shall supervise the Sunday School, the missionary work of the church, the distribution of benevolent funds, the Youth Work, and any other church organization or activity.
 - B. It shall be the duty of the Pastor to preach and teach the Holy Bible and to have general oversight of the spiritual life of the church. The Pastor, as an Elder, also must perform duties listed above.

C. The Deacons shall be wholly accountable to the Elders and serve at whatever tasks the Elders assign, such as the responsibility for the properties of the church and the maintenance of them in proper repair. Their duties shall include but not be limited to such things as ushering, leading singing, assisting with the Lord's Supper and the collection of offerings. They shall provide whatever services are needed for proper operation of the church.

3. SELECTION OF OFFICERS.

A. Elders - The Elders are male members of the church called by the Holy Spirit to be an Elder. A man who is so led should make his desire known to any Elder. In addition, the Elders may encourage men they deem to be qualified to prayerfully consider becoming an Elder. The Elders shall discuss with him the qualifications according to I Tim. 3, Titus 1, and I Peter 5. If accepted by all of the Elders he will be presented as a candidate to the congregation at two consecutive Sunday church services. The congregation may respond to the individual or to the Elders concerning the candidate's moral character and worthiness. After consideration of any objections that have been raised, the Elders may ordain the candidate at a subsequent church service by the laying on of hands. The term of Elder shall be for life or until removed from office unless an individual asks to step down or his membership is terminated. The number of Elders shall not be limited.

B. Pastor – The Pastor shall be recommended to the church by the Elders. He shall be accepted by a proposal at a business meeting.

C. Deacons/Deaconesses – The Deacons and Deaconesses are members of the church called by the Holy Spirit to be a Deacon/Deaconess. A person who is so led should make his/her desire known to any Elder or Deacon. In addition Elders and Deacons may encourage a person they deem to be qualified to prayerfully consider becoming a Deacon or Deaconess. The Elders and Deacons shall discuss with him/her the qualifications according to I Tim. 3, Titus 1, and I Peter 5. If accepted by all of the Elders and Deacons he/she will be presented as a candidate to the congregation at two consecutive Sunday church services. The congregation may respond to the individual or to Elders and Deacons concerning the candidate's moral character and worthiness. After consideration of any objections that have been raised, the candidate may be affirmed by a proposal at a business meeting. If passed the individual is accepted as a Deacon/Deaconess and announced at a subsequent Sunday church service. The term of Deacon/Deaconess shall be for life or until removed from office unless an individual asks to step down or his membership is terminated. The number of Deacons/Deaconesses shall not be limited.

4. REMOVAL FROM OFFICE. Any officer may be removed from office for cause at any business meeting called for that purpose. In addition, the Elders may remove any officer, teacher, or employee at any time.

Article VII

Congregational Meetings

1. ANNUAL MEETINGS - The fiscal year of the church shall end on the thirty-first day of December each year. The annual meeting of the congregation shall be held the third week of January or at such date determined by the Elders and announced to the congregation at the two consecutive regular Sunday services before the meeting.
2. BUSINESS MEETINGS - Meetings of the congregation may be called for the transaction of business. The meeting must be announced at the two consecutive regular Sunday services before the business meeting.
3. SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS – Special business meetings may be called by the Elders or by written request to the Elders by 30 or more voting members. If the Elders fail or refuse to call the requested meeting, then a meeting may be called by a written notice to all members by certified mail with the notice reflecting the names of those requesting the meeting and also giving the time and place of the meeting. The meeting will be held ten days from the day the notices are mailed. Those members present at the special meeting shall select a Chairman who shall preside.
4. MEETING PROCEDURES - If questions arise about procedures, Robert’s Rules of Order will be used in all cases not covered in this Constitution.
5. VOTES NEEDED TO PASS PROPOSALS - A three fourths majority of those voting members present is required to approve all proposals.
6. VOTER ELIGIBILITY - Only members on the church roster 18 years of age or older shall be eligible to vote in any matters concerning church business.

Article VIII

Ordinances

1. BAPTISM - Believer baptism will be by immersion with exceptions made for special circumstances. We do not require re-baptizing people baptized by any other manner or who were baptized as infants. Though baptism is not a requirement for church membership, we encourage believers to be obedient to Christ in this matter, as it is His command for every believer to be baptized.
2. THE LORD'S SUPPER - We believe it is essential for believers to experience the living Christ in fellowship at His table, and to remind the believer of both the work of Christ on their behalf and the glorious hope that He is coming back to share this table personally with His church. The Lord's Supper shall be administered at such times designated by the Elders.

3. AUTHORITY TO ADMINISTER ORDINANCES - Any Elder or person designated by the Elders has the authority to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Article IX

Missionaries and Organizations

Support of missionaries and organizations will be undertaken in an expanding fashion as the church grows and as the Lord leads. The Missions Committee shall present the missionaries and organizations considered for support to the congregation after approval by the Elders. The congregation may respond to the candidate's moral character and worthiness to the Elders. After the Elders consider any objections that have been raised, the candidate may be affirmed by a proposal at a business meeting. The support of missionaries and organizations may be terminated by the same procedure. No missionary or organization shall be supported unless they are in accordance with the doctrine of the church.

Article X

Amendments

The constitution may be changed at a business meeting, providing the proposed alteration has been conspicuously posted in written form on the church premises, or a letter sent to members.

I.

No man shall be considered by GRACE LIFE FELLOWSHIP to become an elder or pastor unless he has embraced and can articulate the essence of the New Covenant teaching of the believers' identity, the co-crucifixion of the believer, the death of the old man, the death of the believer to the power of sin and the law, and the believer's enduring struggle with the flesh.

[This should also include the ability to offer an adequate defense to the common, though misguided, accusations often brought against the New Covenant teaching, including passivity, license, and sinless perfectionism.]