



Grace Bible Church Lakeland Constitution

The Constitution defines our organization. The Bylaws provide direction for our ongoing operation.

Preamble

Since, as we believe, it pleased Almighty God to unite certain of His servants, by His Holy Spirit, in Lakeland, Tennessee for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we do hereby organize ourselves as a church and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance.

Article I: Name

As stated in the Articles of Incorporation, the name of the church shall be Grace Bible Church of Lakeland, Tennessee.

Article II: Foundation and Purpose

1. The foundation of this Church is the Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 3:11), and its code of guidance in all its affairs, the Word of God, and this Church does here affirm its faith that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of Almighty God (Mark 13:31).
2. The mission of this Church is to saturate our lives, families, church, community, and beyond with the gospel of Jesus Christ by pursuing to hear, love, and obey Jesus as His disciples and leading others to do the same.
3. In this pursuit, we endeavor to worship God according to the teaching of His Word, to practice the precepts and examples of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the New Testament, to sustain its ordinances and doctrines and to preach and propagate among all peoples the gospel of salvation which is by personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
4. The priorities of ministry of this church flow from the vision of God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ. We exist to savor this vision in worship (John 4:23), strengthen the vision in nurture and education (I Corinthians 14:26; II Peter 3:18), and spread the vision in evangelism, missions, and loving deeds (I Peter 2:9; 3:15; Matthew 28:18-20; 5:16).

Article III: Confession and Covenant

Statement of Faith

I. The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction. It has God for its author, salvation through Christ for its purpose, and truth without any mixture of error for its content. It reveals the principles by which God will judge us. Therefore, it is and shall remain to the end of the world the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.

II Tim. 3:16-17; II Tim. 3:15; Proverbs 30:5-6; Romans 2:12; Phil. 3:16; I John 4:1

II. The Triune God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God. He is an infinite, intelligent Spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. He is inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love. In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are equal in every divine perfection, yet carry out distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

John 4:24; Ps. 83:18; Heb.3:4; Rom. 1:20; Jer.10:10; Ex.15:11; Ps.147:5; Isa.6:3; I Pet.1:15-16; Rev.4:6-8; Mark 12:30; Rev.4:11; Matt.10:37; Jer.2:12-13; Matt.28:19; John 15:26; I Cor.12:4-6; I John 5:7; John 10:30; John 5:17; John 14:23; John 17:5&10; Acts 5:3-4; I Cor.2:10-11; Phil. 2:5-6; Eph. 2:18; II Cor.13:14; Rev. 1:4-5.

III. Humanity

We believe that humanity is the special creation of God, made in his own image. God created humanity male and female as the crowning work of his creation. The gift of gender is thus part of God's creation. The gift of marriage consists of the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime, and models the way God relates to his people.

IV. The Fall

We believe humanity was created in holiness, under the law of their Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state. As a result, all humans are now sinners, not by constraint but by choice. Being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, they are now positively inclined to evil. Therefore, humanity stands under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

Gen.1:27; Gen.1:31; Ecc.7:29; Acts 17:26-29; Gen.2:16-17; Gen.3:6-24; Rom. 5:12; Rom.5:15-19; Ps.51:5; Rom.8:7; Isa.53:6; Gen.6:12; Rom.3:9-18; Eph.2:1-3; Rom.1:18,32; Rom.2:1-16; Gal.3:10; Matt. 20:15; Ezek. 18:19-20; Rom.1:20; Rom.3:19; Gal. 3:22.

V. The Way Of Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is entirely of grace, through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. By the appointment of the Father, he freely took upon himself our nature, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by his personal obedience, and by his substitutionary death made a full atonement for our sins. He rose from the dead, and is now enthroned in heaven. Jesus unites in his wonderful person the most tender sympathies with divine perfections and, as such, is qualified in every way to be a suitable, compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior.

Eph. 2:3, Matt. 18:11, I John 4:10, I Cor.3:5-7, Acts 15:11, John 3:16, John 1:1-14, Heb. 4:14, Heb. 12-24, Phil. 2:9&14, II Cor. 5:21, Isa. 42:21, Phil. 2:8, Gal. 4:4-5, Rom. 3:21, Isa. 53:4-5, Matt. 20:28, Rom.4:25, Rom. 3:21-26, I John 2:3, I Cor. 15:1-3, Heb.9:13-15, Heb.1:8, Heb. 1:3, Col. 3:1-4, Heb. 7:25, Col. 2:18, Heb. 7:26, Ps. 89:19, Ps.34

VI. Justification

We believe that a great gospel blessing which Christ secures to those who believe in him is Justification. Justification includes both the pardon of sin and the promise of eternal life, on principle of righteousness. It is not bestowed in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood. By virtue of this faith, the perfect righteousness of

Christ is freely imputed to us by God. Justification brings us, immediately at the time of salvation, into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

John 1:16, Eph.3:8, Acts 13:39, Isa. 53:11-12, Rom 5:1-2, Rom. 5:9, Zech. 13;1, Matt. 9:6, Acts 10:43, Rom. 5:17, Titus 3:5-7, I Peter 3:7, I John 2:25, Rom. 5:21, Rom. 4:4-5, Rom. 6:23, Phil. 3:7-9, Rom. 5:19, Rom. 3:24-26, Rom.4:23-25, I John 2:12, Rom. 5:3, Rom. 5:11, I Cor. 1:30-31, Matt. 6:33, I Tim. 4:8

VII. The Freeness Of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel. It is the immediate duty of all to accept these blessings by a heartfelt, repentant, and obedient faith. Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel, which only magnifies his condemnation.

Isa. 55:1, Rev. 22:17, Rom. 16:25-26, Mark 1:15, Rom. 1:15-17, John 5:40, Matt.23:37, Rom.9:32, Pro. 1:24, Acts 13:46, John 3:19, Matt. 11:20, Luke 10:27, II Thess. 1:8

VIII. Grace In Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again. Regeneration consists in the giving of a new and holy disposition to an otherwise rebellious sinner. It is accomplished in a way that is above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit and in connection with divine truth, thus securing our voluntary obedience to the gospel. The proper evidence of regeneration consists in the holy fruits of repentance, faith, and newness of life.

Mark 1:15, Acts 11:18, Eph. 2:8, I John 5:1, John 16:8, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 16:30-31 Luke 18:13, Luke 15:18-21, James 4:7-10, II Cor. 7:11, Tim. 10:12-13, Ps.51, Rom. 10:9-11, Acts 3:22-23, Heb. 4:14, Ps.2:6, Heb. 1:8, Heb. 7:25, II Tim. 1:12

IX. Repentance And Faith

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces that are wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God. He convinces us of our guilt, danger, helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, causing us to turn to God with true sorrow, confession, and pleas for mercy, while at the same time receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King, and relying on him alone as the only and all sufficient Savior.

Mark 1:15, Acts 11:18, Eph. 2:8, I John 5:1, John 16:8, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 16:30-31 Luke 18:13, Luke 15:18-21, James 4:7-10, II Cor. 7:11, Tim. 10:12-13, Ps.51, Rom. 10:9-11, Acts 3:22-23, Heb. 4:14, Ps.2:6, Heb. 1:8, Heb. 7:25, II Tim. 1:12

X. Of God's Purpose of Grace

We believe that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners. Being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, election includes all the means in connection with the end of salvation. It is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy and unchangeable. It utterly excludes boasting and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust, and an active imitation of God's free mercy. It encourages the greatest possible exercise of human responsibility. It may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel. Election is the foundation of Christian assurance, and confirming our election demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

II Tim. 1:8-9; Eph. 1:3-14; I Peter 1:1-2; Rom. 11:5-6; John 15:16; I John 4:19; II Thess. 2:13-14; Acts 13:48; John 10:16; Matt. 20:16; Acts 15:14; Ex. 33:18-19; Matt. 20:15; Eph. 1:11; Rom. 9:23-24; Jer. 31:3; Rom. 11:28-29; James 1:17-18; II Tim. 1:9; Rom. 11:32-36; I Cor. 1:26-31; Rom. 3:27; Rom. 4:16; Col. 3:12; I Cor. 3:5-7; I Cor. 15:10; I Peter 5:10; Acts 1:24; I Thess. 2:13; I Peter 2:9; Luke 18:7; John 15:16; I Thess. 2:12; II Tim. 2:10; I Cor. 9:22; Rom. 8:28-30; John 6:37-40; I Thess 1:4-10; Isa. 42:16; Rom. 11:29; II Peter 1:10-11; Phil. 3:12; Heb. 6:11

XI. Sanctification

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness. It is a progressive work. It begins in regeneration and is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit – the Sealer and Comforter – by the continual use of God’s appointed means, especially including the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, prayer, and the oversight and fellowship of a local church.

I Thess. 4:3; I Thess. 5:23; II Cor. 7:1; II Cor. 13:10; Phil. 3:12-16; I John 2:29; Rom. 8:5; Eph. 1:4; Pro. 4:18; II Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1; II Peter 1:5-8; John 3:6; Phil. 1:9-11; Eph. 1:13-14; Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 4:11-12; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18; II Cor. 13:5; Luke 11:35; Luke 9:23; Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18; Eph. 4:30

XII. The Perseverance Of Saints

We believe that only and all true believers endure to the end. Their persevering attachment to Christ and to his people is the grand mark distinguishing them from false professors. A special providence watches over their welfare, and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

John 8:31; I John 2:27-28; I John 3:9; I John 5:18; I John 2:19; John 13:18; Matt. 13:20-21; John 6:66-69; Job 17:9; Rom. 8:28; Matt. 6:30-33; Jer. 32:40; Ps. 121:3; Ps. 91:11-12; Phil. 1:6; Phil. 2:13; Jude 24:25; Heb. 1:14; II Kings 6:16; Heb. 13:5; I John 4:4

XIII. The Church

We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, joined together by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel. A visible church observes the ordinances of Christ, is governed by his laws, and exercises the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his word. The only scriptural officers of the church are Elders (also called Pastors), and Deacons, whose qualifications and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

I Cor. 1:1-3; Matt. 18:17; Acts 5:11; Acts 8:1; Acts 11:21-23; I Cor. 4:17; I Cor. 14:23; III John 9; I Tim. 3:5; Acts 2:41-42; II Cor. 8:5; Acts 2:47; I Cor. 5:12-13; I Cor. 11:2; II Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17-20; I Cor. 11:23-24; Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5:6; II Cor. 2:17; I Cor. 4:17; Matt. 28:20; John 14:15; John 15:12; I John 14:21; I Thess. 4:2; II John 6; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:7; I Cor. 14:12; Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; Acts 15:22; I Tim. 3; Titus 1

XIV. The Ordinances

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit. This demonstrates, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect our death to sin and resurrection to a new life. Baptism is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and the Lord’s Supper. We likewise believe that the Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby the members of the church, following earnest self-examination, use bread and the cup to commemorate together the dying love of Christ. These two ordinances belong to the gathered church, serving to mark off believers from unbelievers and to make the church visible on earth.

Acts 8:36-39; Matt. 3:5-6; John 3:22-23; John 4:12; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:12; Acts 16:32-34; Acts 18:8; Acts 10:47-48; Gal.3:26-28; Rom.6:4; Col. 2:12; I Peter 3:20-21; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:41-42; I Cor. 11:26; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; I Cor.11:28; I Cor. 5:1-8; I Cor. 10:3-32; I Cor. 11:17-32; John 6:26

XV. Of the Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society, and that government leaders are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Rom. 13:1-7; Deu. 16:18; II Sam. 23:3; Ex. 18:23; Jer. 30:21; Matt. 22:21; Titus 3:1; I Peter 2:13; I Tim. 2:1-4; Acts 5:29; Matt.28; Dan. 3:15-18; Dan. 6

XVI. The Righteous And The Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. Only those who through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in his esteem. In contrast, all those who continue in rebellion and unbelief are wicked in his sight, and under his curse. This distinction holds both in and after death.

Mal. 3:18; Pro. 12:26; Isa. 5:20; Gen. 18:23; Jer. 15:19; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 6:16; Rom. 1:17; Rom. 7:6; I John 2:29; I John 3:7; Rom. 6:18,22; I Cor. 11:32; Pro. 11:31; I Peter 4:17-18; I John 5:19; Gal. 3:10; John 3:36; Isa. 57:21; Ps. 10:4; Isa. 55:6-7; Pro. 14:32; Luke 16:25; John 8:21-24; Pro. 10:24; Luke 12:4-5; Luke 9:23-26; Ecc. 3:17; Matt. 7:13-14

XVII. The World To Come

We believe that the end of the world is approaching. On the Last Day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution. Then a solemn separation will take place, as the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy. This just judgment will fix forever the final state of people in heaven or hell.

I Peter 4:7; I Cor. 7:29-31; Heb. 1:10-12; Matt. 24:35; I John 2:17; Matt. 28:20; Matt. 13:39-40; II Peter 3:3-13; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; Heb. 9:28; Acts 3:21; I Thess 4:13-18; I Thess. 5:1-11; Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:12-58; Luke 14:14; Dan. 12:2 John 5:28-29; John 6:40; John 11:25-26; II Tim. 1:10; Acts 10:42; Matt. 13:49; Matt. 13:37-43; Matt. 24:30-31; Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 22:11; I Cor. 6:9-10; Mark 9:43-48; II Peter 2:9; Jude7; Phil. 3:19; Rom. 6:23; II Cor. 5:10-11; John 4:36; II Cor. 4:18; Rom. 3:5-6; II Thess. 1:6-12; Heb. 6:1-2; I Cor. 4:5; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:2-16; Rev.20:11-12; I John 2:28; I John 4:17; II Peter 3:11-12

Church Covenant

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others. 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. We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

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 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. 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.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

Article IV: Membership

The membership of this Church shall consist of persons who by confession of faith and repentance of sin believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as King and supreme Treasure, who have been baptized in obedience to Christ, who give evidence of regeneration by living consistent with their profession and with the covenant of this Church, and are thereby received into its membership according to the By-Laws of this Church.

Article V. Leadership and Organization

1. Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of The Church. Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the Congregation of the Church is the final authority within this local Church.
2. Congregational authority shall normally be exercised through the election of Elders to oversee the Church. However, the vote of the membership of this Church at a properly called meeting, as defined in the By-Laws, shall be required to effect the following actions:
 - a. Accept members into the Church or give letters of transfer or recommendation to members;
 - b. Discipline members by removing them from membership and discipline elders or deacons by removing them from office;
 - c. Approve those who serve in the offices of the Church (Elders and Deacons) and as officers of the Corporation (President, Secretary, and Treasurer);
 - d. Approve annual budgets of the Church, authorize expenditure of funds of the Church when such expenditure is not covered by an approved budget, and approve any transactions regarding real property;

e. Approve the hire of any Elder who receives financial compensation from the Church for fulfilling his Elder responsibilities;

f. Adopt, amend, or repeal the Constitution or By-Laws of this church;

g. Accept, reject, or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the congregation by the Elders.

3. The biblical offices of the Church shall be Elder (pastor) and Deacon. The purpose of Elders is to commit themselves to the study of the Word and prayer in order to teach, shepherd, and equip the membership to do the work of the ministry. The purpose of Deacons is to serve the body such that Elders are free to commit themselves to the study of the Word and prayer. Elders and Deacons shall be named according to the By-Laws of this Church.

4. The leadership of the Church shall be vested in a plurality of Elders.

a) Elders may be comprised of Staff and Non-Staff Elders. Staff Elders are men who receive financial compensation from the Church as they fulfill God's call to the specific ministries of the Word, prayer and shepherding the flock. Non-Staff Elders are men recommended by the Elders and called by the Church who serve voluntarily without financial support from the Church as they fulfill God's call to the specific ministries of the Word, prayer and shepherding the flock.

b) All Elders, both Staff and Non-Staff, shall be equal in authority though they may function in differing roles according to their giftings and availability.

5. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Tennessee, the Church shall maintain a Board of Directors, including the Officers of President, Secretary, and Treasurer of the Corporation. Elders shall be de facto members of the Board; however no elder may serve as an Officer of the Corporation. The Corporate Officers, and any other board members who are not elders, shall be nominated by the elders and require approval by the congregation.

Article VI: Revisions, Additions And Amendments

1. Revisions, additions or amendments of this constitution may be made only in the following manner:

a. at a congregational meeting; and

b. by a majority vote of the membership, or a two-thirds majority of those members present and voting at such meeting, provided at least ten percent (10%) of the resident membership of the Church is present at such meeting; and

c. after presentation by written motion at a quarterly or special business meeting held at least one month prior; and

d. if notice of the proposed change or addition has been given, in writing and by announcement in at least two congregational gatherings in the interim period between said business meetings.

2. Article II (1) and VI (2) of this constitution shall not be repealed, amended nor revised.

Article VII: Dissolution

1. In the event of a division of this Church, from which may God in His mercy save us, the property of this Church shall belong to the group of such division as represents the largest portion of the Church membership before recognizing a division therein provided such group is loyal to this constitution; otherwise it shall belong to the next largest group remaining loyal to this constitution, and though it may not be the largest group in such division. Should any controversy arise as to whether such loyalty exists, the question shall be submitted to binding Christian Mediation, and failing mediation submitted to binding Christian Arbitration, and that decision shall be final and binding on all parties.

2. Should a condition arise at any time in the future when for any reason the Church work cannot continue, the Church property shall be transferred pursuant to the applicable provisions of the Tennessee Nonprofit Corporation Act.

3. Should conditions arise where a consolidation with another church of the same doctrine be advisable, the Elders shall be authorized by the Church to negotiate the terms of such consolidation insofar as the property of this Church is concerned.