

# **GRACE BAPTIST CHAPEL**

## **CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

### ***Article I. Name and Purpose***

- A. We, a body of believers in Jesus Christ, shall be known as **Grace Baptist Chapel of Hampton, Virginia** and shall be referred to in this document as “this Church.”
- B. We hold the exclusive right to govern this Church and we reserve to ourselves the exclusive right to make the decisions, spiritual and temporal, affecting this Church in accordance with Holy Scripture. This church exists with Christ as its head (Col 1:18) and is Elder led, Deacon served and Congregationally governed. We exist to glorify God in all things through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### ***Article II. Statement of Faith (The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith 1677/89)***

### ***Article III. Membership***

#### A. Qualifications of Members:

1. Any person may present himself to this Church for membership on the basis of any one of the following:
  - a. A profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and subsequent baptism by immersion;
  - b. A letter received from another church of like faith and practice with termination of membership in that church;
  - c. A statement of prior conversion experience and subsequent water baptism.
2. Upon presentation for membership, the candidate shall complete a “new members class” and/or a membership interview or receive equivalent instruction from an Elder. Upon completion of this requirement, the candidate must express agreement with the Articles of Faith adopted by this Church and willingness to be governed by the Constitution and Bylaws of this Church.
3. After completing the requirements under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, a motion to accept the candidate as a member of this Church shall be presented at a quarterly or special congregational meeting. The candidate shall be accepted as a full member of this Church upon an affirmative vote of THREE-QUARTERS (3/4) of a quorum as defined in Article VI, section B.5.

B. Responsibilities of Membership:

1. Members must profess faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation and exhibit repentance of sins and shall make every effort to live a holy life, worthy of the Lord and of their calling and according to the Word of God.
2. Members shall make every effort to maintain the public ordinary means of grace that are needed to live a holy life, and will consider the value of the personal spiritual disciplines including but not limited to regular Bible reading, prayer, worship, evangelism, service, and stewardship.
3. Members agree to submit to the governance of this local assembly and to the leadership of the Elders working for the purity and peace of the bride of Christ. Members agree to devote themselves to this body working to minister using the gifts, talents and resources that God has given.
4. Members shall refrain from using the name of this Church as an endorsement of, or in official connection with, any project, activity, etc., without first receiving proper authorization from the Elders.

C. Separation of Members:

1. Voluntary Separation:

- a. Any member may, by written request, and subsequent church approval by majority vote, have his name removed from the membership roll of this Church.
- b. Upon the request of the member, and approval of this Church by majority vote at the next quarterly business meeting, this Church shall forward a letter of recommendation to any church of like faith and practice.
- c. Upon the request of the member, and approval of this Church by majority vote at the next quarterly business meeting, this Church shall forward a letter of acknowledgment to any church not of like faith and practice.

2. Inactive Separation:

- a. A motion to separate a member because of inactivity must be presented by the Elders and must include a report of actions taken to contact and restore the member to active participation in this Church.
- b. A member separated because of inactivity may be restored to full membership under the provisions of Section A of this Article III.

3. Church Discipline (see Section D — Procedures for Church Discipline)

4. Death: Members shall be removed from this Church roll upon announcement of their homegoing.

D. Procedures for Church Discipline:

1. Basis of Church Discipline.

- a. The chief aim of church discipline is the salvation or restoration of the offender. Therefore, church discipline is a process designed to give the offender opportunity to repent and be restored. Even the act of exclusion is designed to awaken the offender to the seriousness of his condition.
- b. The secondary aim of church discipline is to protect this Church by removing the temptation to sin and by preserving a high moral standard among the members.
- c. Scripture warns against practicing any sin, but not every sin shall be an infraction subject to church discipline. Certain sins are particularly harmful both to the member and to this Church; it is for these kinds of sins that a member of this Church will be subject to church discipline.

2. This Church's Responsibility During Discipline.

- a. The beginning stage of church discipline does not involve this Church; one member who is aware of the sin of another has the initial responsibility to confront that member for the purpose of prompting repentance and restoration.
- b. Once this Church becomes involved, the Elders shall investigate the matter to determine if an offense warranting church discipline has been committed and whether the member involved understands the position and standard of this Church.
- c. If the Elders determine that such an offense has been committed he shall meet with the member involved for the purpose of prompting repentance and restoration.
- d. If the member is unwilling to repent and be restored, the matter shall be presented before the Elders at a special meeting called for that purpose.
- e. During the special meeting of the Elders the member involved shall be given an opportunity to be heard.

- f. At the end of this special meeting of the Elders, a vote of the Elders shall be taken; a THREE-QUARTERS (3/4) vote for dismissal shall be required for the matter to be presented to the congregation.
- g. Any church discipline matter presented to the congregation shall be presented at a special meeting called for that purpose.
- h. The member involved shall be dismissed upon a THREE-QUARTERS (3/4) vote for dismissal by the members present.

### 3. Protection of the Members During Church Discipline.

- a. The goal of church discipline and the procedure outlined in this section is the restoration of the member involved, not his or her dismissal.
- b. The Elders who investigates the matter and meets with the member involved shall keep the information obtained confidential.
- c. Those who are present at the special meeting of the Elders, shall keep the information obtained confidential.
- d. The special congregational meeting shall be opened only to voting members of this Church, as shown on the membership roll at the time of the meeting.
- e. The congregation shall be entitled to only the following information:
  - i. the name of the member subject to discipline; and the general issue/offense requiring discipline (Matt 18:15-17).
  - ii. that the procedures for discipline, as set out in paragraph 2 of this Article D, have been followed; and
  - iii. the vote of the Elders.
- f. The provisions of this section must be administered uniformly and impartially.

## Article IV. *Office Bearers*

### A. Pastor

- 1. Qualifications of the Pastor: Any man called to be the Pastor of this Church must meet the qualifications for Pastor found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 and must

agree with the provisions of this Church's Articles of Faith and with the stated, written positions adopted by this Church.

2. Duties of the Pastor:

- a. The office of Pastor is one of dignity and service. He must shepherd God's flock under his care (1 Peter 5:2), exercise leadership and discipline, and oversee the spiritual interests of the congregation. The Pastor shall serve as an Elder among the council of Elders.
- b. The specific duties of the Pastor include, but are not limited to, preaching and teaching the Word of God, administering the ordinances of this Church, visiting the sick of this Church, and supervising church activities and ministries. The Pastor shall serve as the primary teaching and preaching Elder of the church (1 Tim 5:17) in addition to undertaking all the tasks of the Elders articulated in Article IV, Section B.

3. Calling:

- a. *Pastor Selection Committee:* When a vacancy in the pastorate occurs, a Pastor Selection Committee shall be nominated by the Elders and approved by this Church. The Pastor Selection Committee shall include at least the Elders an Elder shall be appointed as chairman. The Pastor Selection Committee shall, after consultation and deliberation, recommend to the congregation a pastoral candidate who, in its judgment, fulfills the requirements of that office.
- b. *Examination of Candidate:* The Pastor Selection Committee shall examine any candidate for full information about his salvation and Christian experience, his personal character and management of his family, his call to the ministry, his theological views, his understanding and appreciation of the ordinances of this Church, his knowledge of Church history, and his views on the principles and rules of church government and discipline.
- c. *Presentation of Candidate:* The Pastor Selection Committee may, upon choosing a candidate meeting the qualifications of paragraph 1 of this Section and after completing its examination of the candidate under subparagraph b of this paragraph, extend an invitation to the candidate to be examined by this Church.
  - i. *Notice of Candidate's Visit:* Public notice of the scheduled meetings involving the candidate shall be given from the pulpit of this Church during the two Sunday morning services immediately preceding the Sunday morning at which the candidate will be preaching. Each member shall also be notified of the candidate's visit by mail or electronic means. This notice must include the candidate's biographical information, a report on the examination conducted by the committee, and the schedule of meetings with the candidate and at which the candidate will be considered.
  - ii. *Congregational Meetings:* A called congregational meeting will be held within two weeks following the Sunday on which the candidate preached

at this Church. This meeting will be for discussion and prayer only, and no vote will be held. At this meeting the date of the vote shall be announced. The vote must take place on a Sunday morning, during or immediately following the regular worship service, and must take place on the first or second Sunday morning next following the candidate's visit.

- iii. Voting: Every member present on church property during that service, but no others, shall be entitled to vote. The vote shall be by secret ballot without discussion. A THREE-QUARTERS (3/4) vote of the ballots cast will constitute an official call to the pastorate.

#### 4. Separation of Pastor:

- a. This Church may separate with the Pastor by a THREE-QUARTERS (3/4) of the members present at a special congregational meeting called for that purpose. Public notice of this meeting shall be given from the pulpit of this Church during the two Sunday morning services immediately preceding the date of the meeting.
  - b. The motion for separation shall be presented by the Elders and shall include the specific cause for the action, the specific qualification that the Pastor no longer meets.
  - c. This Church may, upon vote of separation, authorize the Treasurer to pay the Pastor a severance.
5. Resignation of Pastor: A Pastor may resign at any time by written resignation presented to the Elders. The Pastor's resignation shall be publicly accepted at the next quarterly congregational meeting of this Church or at a special meeting called for that purpose. This Church may, at that meeting, authorize the Treasurer to pay the Pastor a severance.

#### B. Elders

- 1. The office of Elder should not be entered into lightly (James 3:1). The office of Elder, Pastor and Overseer are all synonymous in Scripture. The Elders shall oversee the ministry, resources and shepherding of the church (1 Tim 5:17, 1 Thess 5:12-14, 1 Pet 5:1-4). They shall shepherd the flock through teaching, prayer and leadership not under compulsion, but willingly and shall equip this body for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12). They shall be men of prayer and men of the Word of God and shall teach the Word, encourage sound doctrine, exhort the body, refute error, pray for the sick, provide pastoral care for the members and shall oversee the ministries, discipline, Deacons and committees of this church. Elders shall be responsible for the direction of worship services, the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the interviewing of prospective members and shall seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).

2. Elders shall meet the Biblical qualifications of 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Elders shall be men only (1 Tim 2:12) and shall express a willingness not to contradict the Articles of Faith of this church. The elders shall be made of three or more qualified men and may or may not be in the pay of this church based on vocation. The elders although possessing differing gifts shall be equal in authority. Elders will be nominated by the current council of elders and will set apart by the congregation of this church and respected as men who evidence the calling, character and capabilities of the office. If there is an insufficient number of qualified men to serve as elders, the congregation shall seek the leadership of the Pastor until such time as a plurality of elders can be determined. (Titus 1:5). If at any given time a plurality of elders does not exist, the Pastor shall nominate to the church body one or more qualified elder candidates.
  - a. Each Elder shall be nominated unanimously by the active Elders and be elected by this Church at the annual meeting for the election of officers or at a special meeting called for that purpose. The name of a proposed elder shall be released at least 28 days prior to the congregational vote for that proposed Elder. The proposed Elder must receive  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the vote in order to be selected.
  - b. Each Elder shall serve as long as he is Biblically qualified and able to fulfill his duties. Elders, with the exception of vocational pastors, will be presented by the elders to the congregation every three years for reaffirmation and must receive at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  quarters of the ballots cast.
  - c. Elders, to include vocational pastors, will be afforded the opportunity for sabbatical as the time, need and resources present themselves.
  - d. The Elders shall nominate and elect their own chairman and any other officers as needed.
3. Elders shall provide for the ministry of preaching and the conduct of worship services in the absence of the Pastor, shall direct the preparation of the elements for the ordinance of the Lord's Supper and shall assist the Pastor in its observance. They shall assist the Pastor in his duties, including but not limited to, visitation and oversight of this Church as needed, and shall be aware of the financial and physical problems of the members, especially widows, and be prepared to recommend appropriate actions be taken by this Church.
4. Elders shall monitor the income and expenses of this Church and prepare and present a budget for this Church each fiscal year, with the assistance of the Treasurer. They shall appoint up to two (2) Assistant Treasurers, one of which may be an Elder, both having authority to sign checks and to act in the Treasurer's absence.
5. Elders shall have authority over the property of this Church and over any matters not specifically designated by these bylaws as the function of other officers. Elders may propose further staff positions subject to congregational approval as well as create volunteer ministry positions within the membership of the church.

6. Separation of Elders:

- a. An Elder may separate from his service by voluntary resignation submitted in writing to the other active Elders.
- b. An Elder may be separated from his service by a THREE-QUARTERS (3/4) vote of the members present at a special business meeting called for that purpose. Public notice of this meeting shall be given from the pulpit of this Church during the two Sunday morning services immediately preceding the date of the meeting. In the event of the necessity for discipline of an Elder arises, the principles set forth in Matt 18:15-17 and 1 Tim 5:19-21 should be followed.

C. Deacons

1. The office of Deacon is set forth in 1 Tim 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7 and is a recognized office of service within the Church of God. The number of Deacons serving at any time will be based on the church's size and service needs. Any person called to be a Deacon of this Church must meet the qualifications for Deacon found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and must express a willingness not to contradict the provisions of this Church's Articles of Faith and with the stated, written positions adopted by this Church.

2. Duties of Deacons:

- a. Deacons shall provide for the temporal needs of this church such as, but not limited to: the financial benevolence of this Church, caring for those within this Church, ministering to those outside this Church, mercy ministry, counting, Building and Grounds and other such service-oriented tasks. Deacons shall serve under the leadership and direction of the Elders. Deacons shall not be appointed to serve as a "council" or "board" but rather shall be individually devoted to particular service ministries within the church and shall have regular contact with the council of Elders.

3. Nomination, Election, and Term:

- a. Each shall be nominated by the Pastor and the active Elders and be elected by this Church at the annual meeting for the election of officers or at a special meeting called for that purpose. The name of a proposed Deacon shall be released at least 28 days prior to the congregational vote for that proposed Deacon.
- b. A Deacon's term shall be three years. A Deacon's term of office may be renewed, or terminated either by resignation, discipline, expiration of term or when the Elders deem that particular Deacon's area of service is no longer needed.



#### D. Treasurer

1. Qualification of Treasurer: The Treasurer must be a man experienced in managing money and accounts and have a reputation for integrity in business dealings.
2. Term of Treasurer: The initial term of any newly appointed Treasurer shall be two years, after which he may succeed himself for one year terms.
3. Duties of Treasurer:
  - a. The Treasurer shall keep an accurate and confidential record of individual contributions to this Church and will distribute a statement of contributions to each contributor annually or additionally as requested.
  - b. The Treasurer shall receive the funds contributed or paid to this Church and shall deposit, hold, and manage them in appropriate financial institutions and investments. He shall be responsible for the disbursement of Church funds according to this Church's budget.
  - c. The Treasurer shall present a quarterly written report to this Church at each quarterly congregational meeting showing the receipts, expenditures, and transfers for the previous calendar quarters.
  - d. If this Church's budget includes a contingency account, the Treasurer may disperse funds from that contingency account only with the approval of two Elders.
  - e. For the purposes of this Constitution, the Treasurer may advise the Elders whether or not a member contributes to this church, but the Treasurer may not reveal the amounts of any contributions.

#### E. Trustees

1. Number of Trustees: There shall be no less than two (2) Trustees serving at any time and this Church may approve additional Trustees, not to exceed five (5), as the need exists.
2. Term of Trustees: Trustees shall be appointed for a five (5) year term and may succeed themselves indefinitely.
3. Duties of Trustees: Under the spiritual direction of the Elders, Trustees hold in trust the real estate property of this Church and may represent this Church in legal matters pertaining to this Church that are specific issues of direct congregational action; but they have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, encumber, pledge the credit of this Church, or transfer any property without a specific vote of this Church authorizing such action.

#### F. Church Clerk

1. The Clerk shall be responsible for keeping accurate and complete minutes of the reports and business transacted at the annual, quarterly and special meetings of this Church.
2. The Clerk shall keep an accurate register of the members of this Church, including a separate record of baptisms and transfers into or out of this Church's membership.
3. The Clerk shall maintain Church files that include the membership register, minutes of meetings, a master copy of the Constitution and Bylaws, and any correspondence relating to membership.
4. The Clerk shall present a quarterly report to this Church at each quarterly congregational meeting detailing the minutes of the last meeting and any membership changes made in the previous quarter.

#### G. Moderator

1. Appointment of Moderator: The Elders shall appoint the Moderator for each congregational meeting, who shall be one of the Elders who is not, at the time of that meeting, serving as Chairman.
2. Duties of Moderator: The Moderator shall preside over the congregational meetings of this Church according to *Robert's Rules of Order* (latest revision) or some other set of rules adopted by this Church.

H. Sunday School Superintendent: The Sunday School Superintendent shall oversee the Sunday School Program of this Church including selection of curriculum, division of classes, development of teachers, and providing substitute teachers when necessary.

#### I. Miscellaneous Provisions

1. No person shall be qualified to hold any office provided for in Article IV unless he or she is a member of this Church and is qualified to vote under Article VI, Section B, except that this Church may call a Pastor who is not, at the time the call is extended, a member of this Church.
2. All office bearers shall hold their office for a term of one year and may succeed themselves indefinitely unless otherwise stated in this Article IV.

### **Article V. *Auditing Committee***

#### A. Auditing Committee

1. **Committee Responsibility:** The Auditing Committee shall audit, at least twice during each fiscal year, the financial records of this Church to insure accuracy of its records and to certify the integrity and accounting practices of the Treasurer.
2. **Composition of Committee:** The Auditing Committee shall consist of two contributing members of this Church who are not otherwise responsible for counting, recording, or disbursing Church funds.
3. **Term of Committee Members:** Each appointed member shall serve for two years and may be nominated by the elders and elected for additional terms after being inactive for one year. Any committee member may be elected for a shorter term if he or she is replacing a separating member or to provide a smoother rotation schedule.

## **Article VI. Church Meetings**

A. **Worship Services:** Regular services for worship will be held each Sunday morning except under unusual circumstances when the Pastor and available Elders may cancel the services.

### **B. Congregational Meetings**

1. Quarterly congregational meetings shall be held on the second Sunday of January, April, July, and October. The business of this Church shall be transacted and the reports of officers and committees shall be given during these meetings.

a. The quarterly congregational meetings held in April and October shall be for only business announced previous to the meeting and no new business may be presented at these meetings.

b. The quarterly-congregational meetings held in January and July shall be for any business presented by any member. Announced agenda items shall be presented first, and then any new business may be presented.

2. An annual congregational meeting shall be held on the second Sunday of December for the purpose of voting on an elder-proposed budget for the next fiscal year.

3. Special congregational meetings may be called by the Elders for consideration of specific issues. Public notice of this meeting, including the specific issue to be considered, shall be given from the pulpit of this Church during the two Sunday morning services immediately preceding the date of the meeting.

4. *Robert's Rules of Order* (latest edition) shall be the authority for parliamentary procedure at congregational meetings.

5. A quorum consists of 1/5 of the current voting membership.
6. A member shall be eligible to vote when he or she has attained the age of eighteen (18) years.

### **Article VII. *Purchase of Real Property***

- A. This Church shall have the right to purchase any real property determined necessary for the carrying out of its objectives after following the procedures set out in this Article.
- B. An on-site inspection of the real property shall be made by the Pastor, the Elders, the members of Building and Grounds Committee and the Trustees.
- C. A special meeting of those required to inspect the real property shall be held to determine whether to present the purchase of the real property to this Church. A THREE QUARTERS (3/4) vote approving purchase is required to present a motion to this Church.
- D. The Elders shall present the motion to purchase the real property at a special business meeting called for that purpose. A THREE-QUARTERS (3/4) vote of this Church at that special congregational meeting shall be required to purchase the property.

### **Article VIII. *Miscellaneous Provisions***

- A. Fiscal Year: The fiscal year of this Church shall be the calendar year.
- B. Amendments
  1. Proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws must be submitted to the Elders for consideration. Upon consideration, the Elders may reject the proposed amendment, may recommend its adoption by this Church, or may present it to this Church without recommendation.
  2. The amendment may be presented at any quarterly congregational meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose.
  3. The amendment may be voted on at any quarterly or special congregational meeting that is held at least 27 days after the meeting at which the amendment was presented.
  4. A THREE QUARTERS (3/4) vote approving the amendment shall be required to amend the Constitution and Bylaws.
- C. Other Ministries
  1. This Church may engage in ministries other than those set out in these Bylaws and may appoint qualified members of this Church to lead or work in these ministries under the guidance and direction of the Elders.