

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

GRACE CHURCH

The Constitution and Bylaws of Grace Church DeFuniak, Inc.
(A Florida Non-profit Religious Corporation)
Adopted February 2016

The articles listed herein are derived from and have their source in Holy Scripture, which shall be Grace Church's final and sole source of authority.

ARTICLE I – Name and Principal Office

The name of the Corporation is Grace Church DeFuniak, Inc. This Corporation will be further referred to in the bylaws as the “Church”, “GC”, or “Grace Church”. The Church maintains its principal office at 757 Hwy 331 South, Suite B, DeFuniak Springs, FL, 32435.

ARTICLE II – Purpose

Grace Church exists to glorify God by magnifying Jesus, equipping believers, and impacting our neighbors and the nations with the Gospel. Further, we believe that the mission of Grace Church is to mobilize and multiply the body both locally and globally.

ARTICLE III – Statement of Faith

Grace Church adopts and affirms the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000.

ARTICLE IV – Affiliation

Grace Church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation with other churches, this Church voluntarily affiliates with like-minded, Evangelical Churches and organizations.

ARTICLE V – Membership

SECTION I. Procedure For Admission To Membership

It is the desire of Grace Church to freely extend its fellowship to all individuals. At the same time, Grace Church desires to uphold the biblical mandate of commitment to Christ and to His Church.

- a. Membership Classes – All prospective members must attend our “Membership Matters” class. These classes will be offered periodically on “as needed” basis. All who attend the membership class are able but not obligated to sign up for a membership interview, the second step of the membership process.
- b. Membership Interview – The membership interview consists of the prospective member meeting with an elder in order to provide basic biographical information and recount God's converting work in his or her life. The prospective member would then sign Grace Church's statement of faith and membership covenant (see [appendix I](#)). The elders would

then review the application of the prospective member.

- c. Elder Recommendation – At a regularly scheduled elders’ meeting, the elder, who conducted the membership interview, will review the applicant’s testimony with the other elders. Upon receiving their collective approval, the candidate’s application proceeds to the next step: congregational affirmation.
- d. Congregational Affirmation – Membership candidates are presented to the Church with an approval from one of the elders. The congregation will then affirm the prospective member’s desire to covenant with Grace Church.

SECTION II. Voting Rights of Membership

Every active/resident member, 16 years of age or older, shall have the right to vote on the following matters: the annual budget of the Church, the disposition of all or substantially all of the assets of the Church, the merger or dissolution of the Church, acquisition of property and amendments to the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws of the Church, and the calling of Pastoral staff. Each member is entitled to one vote. Voting by proxy is prohibited.

SECTION III. Termination of Membership

Members shall be removed from the Church roll for the following reasons:

- Death.
- Transfer of membership to another church, or ceasing to be an active participant in the body of GC, as determined by the elders.
- By personal request of the member, except when that member is in the process of church discipline. If it appears to the elders that a member has requested removal merely to avoid church discipline, that request may not be honored until the disciplinary process has been properly concluded.
- Dismissal by the elders according to the following conditions:
 - The member’s life and conduct is not in accordance with the membership covenant in such a way that the member hinders the ministry influence of the Church in the community.
 - Procedures for the dismissal of a member shall be according to Scriptures such as Matthew 18:15-17, and other relevant Scriptures as interpreted by the elders and the Grace Church Guardian Policy (see [appendix III](#)).

SECTION IV. Restoration of Members

Members dismissed by the elders shall be restored by the elders according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8, and the Grace Church Guardian Policy, when their life-styles are judged to be in accordance with the Membership Covenant.

SECTION VI. Amendments

This Constitution may be amended by a vote of 2/3’s of the voting members present at a duly called business meeting called for the purpose of amending this Constitution providing the elders have approved the proposed amendment.

SECTION VIII. Church Discipline

Church discipline shall be carried out according to the Grace Church Guardian Policy (see [appendix III](#)), as developed and interpreted by the elders.

ARTICLE VI – Meetings of Members

Business meetings of the members shall be held in the times, in the manner, and the purposes set forth below:

- An annual business meeting of the Church will be held to adopt an annual budget and conduct any other business deemed appropriate by the elders.
- A special business meeting of the Church may be called at any time by the elders.
- Notification of business meetings shall be given to members by any one of the following methods:
 - Distribution of written material to the congregation in attendance at all Sunday Services.
 - Announcement of the meeting in the Church newsletter.
 - Oral announcement to the congregation at all Sunday services.
 - By first-class letter to members.
- Members shall be notified no less than one week prior to a business meeting.
- A quorum shall consist of those members present and voting.

Article VII – Church Government

Scripture indicates that the responsibility for shepherding and leading the church under Jesus Christ belongs to the elders. As necessary, the Scriptures also provides for the appointment of deacons to serve the church, particularly in areas of ministry that would cause the elders to neglect their Biblical responsibilities. (cf. Acts 6:1-7)

SECTION I. Elder Qualifications

Elders shall meet the qualifications and standards of the Word of God prescribed for their office. They shall endeavor, by God’s grace, to live and serve in full conformity to the standards found in John 21:16; Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3; and Titus 1:5-9.

SECTION II. Elder Responsibilities

- He will be responsible for the spiritual oversight (shepherding) of the local church of Almighty God. (Tit. 1:7; Acts 20:28)
- He will be responsible to be a guardian of the truth, care for the welfare of the members in every area, and is responsible to God. (I Tim 3:1-2; Tit 1:7; Heb. 13:17)
- He is to exercise leadership and authority in the local church as a member of the body of elders. (I Tim 3:4-5)
- He will be required to both hold fast and to apply the Scriptures. (Tit 1:9)
- He will be required to reprove, rebuke, and exhort according to the principles of Scripture. (Tit. 1:9, 13; 2 Tim. 3:16)
- He will be required to “feed the flock,” by ministering the Word of God whether publicly or privately. (I Tim 3:2, I Pet 5:2-3; Acts 20:28)
- He is required, by virtue of his office, to be an example to those both inside and outside the local church. (I Pet 5:3)

SECTION III. Elder Selection

The elders, other than the vocational elders (pastors), shall serve three-year terms and are subject to an annual evaluation. Elders shall not serve more than 1 three-year term, at which time they shall rotate off for a minimum of one year. Exceptions to this term limitation shall require the unanimous consent of the remaining elders. The selection process shall be as follows:

- The current elders shall provide the congregation with Biblical teaching concerning the tasks and qualifications of elders.
- The congregation shall submit names of men to the elders for their consideration.
- The men shall perform extensive self-evaluation based upon the Scriptural teaching concerning elders.
- The elders shall interview those men who remain in the process following the self-evaluation.
- The elders shall recommend to the congregation the men they feel best fulfill the Biblical requirements for elders.

SECTION IV. Dismissal of Elders

The dismissal of an elder shall be the responsibility of the remaining elders. Action to dismiss an elder shall require the unanimous consent of the remaining elders.

SECTION V. Deacon Responsibilities

Deacons shall serve the church by coordinating and overseeing specific areas of ministry assigned to them by the elders (Acts 6:1-7). Such areas may include: hospitality, technology, nursery, as well as local ministry and missions. Other areas of service will be appointed as deemed appropriate by the elders.

SECTION VI. Deacon Qualifications

Deacons shall meet the qualifications and standards of the Word of God prescribed for their office. They shall endeavor, by God's grace, to live and serve in full conformity to the standards found in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

SECTION VII. Deacon Selection

Deacons shall serve three-year terms and are subject to an elder evaluation at the end of each year. Deacons shall not serve more than 1 three-year term, at which time they shall rotate off for a minimum of one year. Exceptions to this term limitation shall require the unanimous consent of the elders.

- The current elders shall nominate candidates for deacons as they determine a need is present.
- The nominees shall perform extensive self-evaluation based upon the Scriptural teaching concerning deacons.
- The elders shall interview those nominees who remain in the process following the self-evaluation.
- The elders shall recommend the nominees to the congregation for their evaluation. Any concerns shall be taken up first with the nominee in question and then with the current elders.
- Following the congregational evaluation, a time of dedication and congregational affirmation shall be held for the new deacons.

SECTION VIII. Dismissal of Deacons

The dismissal of a deacon shall be the responsibility of the elders. Action to dismiss a deacon shall require the unanimous consent of the elders.

Article VIII – Pastoral Staff

SECTION I. Qualifications

All pastoral staff shall meet the Biblical qualifications for elders and shall serve Grace Church in this capacity.

SECTION II. Selection and Calling of Pastors

In the event of a pastoral vacancy, the elders shall conduct a search for an acceptable candidate to present to the congregation. Having selected the candidate, he shall be presented to the congregation for a congregational vote. The extension of a call shall be made upon an affirmative vote by a minimum of 90% of the members present and voting at a duly called business meeting.

SECTION III. Hiring of Church Staff

The hiring of church staff shall be the responsibility of the elders and subject to congregational affirmation.

SECTION IV. Dismissal of Pastoral Staff

The dismissal of any pastoral staff member shall be the responsibility of the elders. Action to dismiss the pastoral staff member shall require the unanimous consent of all of the remaining elders.

Appendix I

GRACE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

As one who has been led by the Spirit of God to repent of my sins, believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior, and place my faith in His finished work on my behalf, I solemnly and joyfully enter into this covenant with the other members of Grace Church.

Before God and by the power of the Holy Spirit we prayerfully covenant together:

- I.** To nurture an authentic, abiding relationship with Christ through prayer, worship, fellowship, and Bible study. (Acts 2:42; Matt. 6:6; John 4:23-24; 2 Tim: 3.16-17; Ps: 18:30)
- II.** To regularly fellowship with an individual or a small group for the purpose of spiritual growth, encouragement, support, and accountability. While attending a small group is not a requirement for church membership, the leadership of Grace Church highly recommends, for the sake of your spiritual maturation, that you take part in these groups. (1 Thes. 5:11; Hebrews 3:12-19)
- III.** To be nurtured and fed through the corporate gatherings of the church. Participation in these assemblies will be one of the main priorities in our lives. (Ps. 22:22-27; Heb. 10:19-25; Rev. 19:4-10)
- IV.** To pray for and build authentic relationships with those who don't know Christ with the hope of sharing the message of the Gospel with them. (Matt. 9:35-38; 2 Tim. 4:5; Jude 20-23)
- V.** To responsibly steward our spiritual gifts in order to strengthen the faith of one another. (1 Cor. 12:7-11, 21-31)
- VI.** To steward our material resources in such a way that honors God, and giving to the local body at Grace Church is a regular part of that stewarding. (2 Cor. 9:6-8; 1 Tim. 6:18)
- VII.** To pledge our cooperation, submission, and prayer support to the elders of Grace Church and to those God has called into positions of leadership. (Heb. 13:7,17)
- VIII.** To endorse wholeheartedly the Statement of Faith (BF&M 2000), the Constitution, and the Guardian Policy of Grace Church. (3 John 3-4; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; Matt. 18:15-20)

I pledge to fulfill all of the above commitments to Christ and His Body as a member of Grace Church.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Appendix II

**GRACE CHURCH SMALL GROUP
LEADER'S COVENANT**

- I.** I commit to maintain an intimate, growing relationship with Jesus Christ.
- II.** I commit to embody, reflect, and live out the vision and values of Grace Church.
- III.** I will be loyal and supportive to the leadership of the Pastoral team and the Grace Church leadership and encourage my group to pray for them regularly.
- IV.** I commit to faithfully attend Sunday morning worship and model faithfulness for those in my small group.
- V.** I commit to preparing the group discussions before each small group and will do my best to be prepared as a leader.
- VI.** I will identify, recruit, and train an apprentice (assistant leader) so he or she can develop the skills necessary to lead a group.
- VII.** I commit to providing compassionate and encouraging care to those in my group on an ongoing basis.
- VIII.** I commit to address specific needs of the group, which may be beyond my ability to handle, with the Pastoral leadership of Grace Church.
- IX.** I will strive to build genuine and authentic relationships with those in my group by showing care, providing encouragement, and praying for their needs.
- X.** I will endeavor to handle conflict in the group with love and patience.
- XI.** I will strive to keep the spirit of my group positive by squelching gossip with truth and avoiding a negative or critical spirit.
- XII.** I will commit to attend Small Group Leader's meetings.

I covenant together with the leadership of Grace Church to honor this agreement for the glory of God and unity in His Body.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Appendix III

GRACE CHURCH GUARDIAN POLICY

“Pursuing someone in sin is the most loving thing that can be done for that individual, the body of Christ, and the name of Christ.” Shepherding the Church Family

Church discipline at Grace Church is founded upon the holiness and the love of our glorious God, the Lordship of Jesus Christ who is the head of the church, and an understanding of the church as the Body of Christ. (Eph. 4-5; Col. 1:9-29)

Discipline is a courageous and compassionate act of love, desiring only good for the person caught in sin. Its aim is rescue, restoration, and reconciliation. Just as discipline is a mark of a healthy family, church discipline is a mark of a healthy church. The context and prerequisite for church discipline is authentic Christian community. (Prov. 3:11-12; 1 Cor. 5:5, 11:32; 1 Tim. 1:20; Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 3:19)

The primary teaching and hopeful desire of the elders at Grace Church is for believers to develop self-discipline, so that they may be lead godly lives characterized by obedient faith. We believe that love for God, the first and greatest command by our Lord Jesus Christ, is manifested primarily through diligent obedience to the Word of God and love for other believers. (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Col. 3:5-10; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Heb. 3:12-15, 12:14-17; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; 2 Pet. 1:3-11; Rev. 3:14)

Church discipline has 3 purposes:

1. To glorify and honor God through obedience to His Word.
2. To protect and maintain the purity of the local church by pursuing individual and corporate holiness.
3. To rescue and restore believers overtaken by sin.

We believe that church discipline should be exercised in every case of substantiated, habitual, willful, unrepentant sin when the erring party is not willing to make any attempt to resolve the matter. Though not an exhaustive list, the following sins are addressed by the New Testament church: divisiveness (2 Thess. 3:11; Titus 3:10-11; Rom. 16:17-20), irresponsible and undisciplined living (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15), sexual immorality (1Cor 5:1-13), doctrinal heresy (1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 2 John 1:10-11; Rev. 2:14-16).

The actions and heart attitude of the church, particularly the elders, are to be characterized by humility, compassion, mercy, gentleness, and fairness (Gal. 6:1-2; James 5:19-20; 2 Thess. 3:15; 1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:4-8; Micah 6.8). Elders and deacons are held to an even higher standard of accountability (1 Tim. 3:1-7, 5:17-22; James 3:1).

We believe that church discipline is applicable to all members and believers who fellowship with us. Withdrawal of membership or fellowship does not necessarily negate the process of church discipline, particularly where it appears that a person has done so to avoid church discipline. Such requests may not be honored until the disciplinary process has been concluded.

If a believer fails to discipline himself and demonstrates no evidence of repentance, the Scriptures clearly indicate that loving confrontation is the responsibility of the church. Church discipline is a biblical process that is to be handled prayerfully, carefully, and justly and only after several individual attempts at correction have been attempted and have failed.

The basic stages of church discipline, according to Matthew 18:15-20, are as follows.

FIRST: If a Christian fails to discipline himself and is trapped in unrepentant sin, Christ commands (“Go and show him his fault, just between the two of you”) the individual who is aware of the matter to go to him in private to lovingly confront, counsel, and encourage him to repent.

SECOND: If he will not listen to the one person, especially after several attempts, and there is no evidence of repentance, “take one or two others along with you” to further address the matter and to continue to encourage him to repent. The intent of others being involved is to guarantee clear communication and to enlist others for prayer and discernment.

THIRD: If these personal and informal steps do not elicit repentance, Jesus says we should “tell it to the church”. Tell it to the church necessarily involves bringing the elders into the process and requesting their direct assistance in resolving the problem, if they were not involved in the previous steps. In some cases, one or more elders may repeat the previous steps and try to persuade the offender to repent. The elders, after confirming the information, a proper process, and continued refusal to repent may then inform the church when it is assembled. The elders will send a letter by registered mail warning the individual that the third or fourth step of church discipline will be taken if they have not received significant evidence of repentance by a specific date.

“Telling it to the church” means that the congregation will be informed about the general nature of the sin, given a general description of the process that has taken place, and about the refusal to repent. They will be asked to pray for and plead with the offender to repent and to pursue the person for the purpose of restoration. Personal visits, telephone calls, and letters are examples of what it means to “pursue” them. The church is to keep on loving them and seeking their restoration.

FOURTH: If the offender refuses to submit to the caring admonition of the church and continues to harden his heart, then the person is publicly dismissed from Covenant Church Membership with the hope of future repentance and reconciliation. In addition, we encourage the Grace Church family to pray for the restoration of the individual. (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 1:20, 3:6,14; 1Cor. 5:1-5; 1Tim 6:3-5; Titus 3:10)

If at any point during this process, the offender demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect will also be made publicly so that the church may rejoice and gently and judiciously restore the repentant believer to the fellowship of the church.

We accept these stages as principles prescribed by our Lord and our Scriptures. The elders of the church, after prayer and consultation with one another and the Holy Scriptures, may eliminate, compress, contract, or combine into one any of these stages. Elders are commanded to protect the flock and some forms of sinful conduct deemed harmful to the flock may require immediate action. (Acts 20:28-31; Titus 3:10; 1 Cor. 5:1-5)