

CONSTITUTION

CHURCH COVENANT & CONFESSION OF FAITH

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

FOR THE TRUTH. FOR THE WORLD. FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

500 Cosmopolitan Ave. Marshall, MI 49068
(269) 781-3558
www.GraceBaptistMarshall.com

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**CONSTITUTION OF
GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
MARSHALL, MICHIGAN**

PREAMBLE

We are admonished in Scripture to "let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). To this end we, members of Grace Baptist Church of Marshall, MI, solemnly and sincerely set forth the following Constitution by which we willingly and cheerfully agree to be governed.

ARTICLE I: NAME

Grace Baptist Church of Marshall, MI, shall be the name of the physical properties and the congregation.

ARTICLE II: COVENANT

Having been led as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to educate our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all gossip, backbiting, and unrighteous anger.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We, moreover, engage that when we move from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with another church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

ARTICLE III: INCORPORATION

Grace Baptist Church received official recognition as a nonprofit organization from the State of Michigan on February 10, 2003, and from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on May 31, 2003.

ARTICLE IV: AUTONOMY

Grace Baptist Church shall be and remain an autonomous Baptist church. Nevertheless, it may enter into cooperative relationships with organizations and associations of like faith and practice, so long as the organization or association would not infringe upon the sovereignty of this church.

ARTICLE V: PURPOSE

Grace Baptist Church exists to make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of God. This church shall accomplish its mission through outreach, education, fellowship, worship, and service.

ARTICLE VI: STATEMENT OF FAITH

Section 1

Standing firmly in the ancient Christian tradition, we accept the early church creeds as accurate statements of biblical doctrine. This includes the Apostles Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon.

Section 2

As heirs of the Reformation, we also affirm the “Five Solas”: *Sola Scriptura* (“Scripture Alone”), *Sola Gratia* (“Grace Alone”), *Sola Fide* (“Faith Alone”), *Solus Christus* (“Christ Alone”), and *Soli Deo Gloria* (“To the Glory of God Alone”).

Section 3

Finally, as a Baptist church, we accept a revised *Baptist Confession of Faith* (also known as the *Second London Baptist Confession*) as an accurate statement of our principles and require “substantial agreement” with this document as a condition for church membership.

ARTICLE VII: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Authority

Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the membership as a whole is the final authority within this local church, the proper exercise of which is outlined in the succeeding articles of this constitution.

Section 2: Regular Membership

To qualify for regular membership in this church, a person must (1) Be at least 18 years of age; (2) Give a satisfactory testimony to the elder(s) of having been born again; (3) Be baptized by immersion or have been baptized by immersion through the ministry of an evangelical church; (4) Affirm in writing that he/she is willing to abide by the provisions of this constitution; and (5) Must not hold membership in any other church.

Section 3: Associate Membership

Individuals temporarily residing in the Marshall area and desiring to become members of this church may do so as associate members. Persons desiring said membership must meet the requirements of regular membership, except for the fifth requirement. If a person does hold membership in another church, that church must be of like faith and practice with this church. Associate members shall have all the privileges of regular membership except for the right to hold an elected position in the church. At any time, regular membership may be requested by an associate member.

Section 4: Admission into Membership

To be admitted into church membership a person must have the recommendation of the elder(s) and must be accepted by majority vote of the voting members present at any regularly or specially called membership meeting.

ARTICLE VIII: DISCIPLINE AND TRANSFERS

Section 1: Basis for Discipline

In all matters of discipline, the church must adhere faithfully to the principles and order found in Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1.

Section 2: Procedure for Discipline

1. Any member absent for a period of six months shall be contacted by an elder. If repeated attempts to return the member to regular attendance prove fruitless, the elder(s) shall inform the congregation and a letter shall be sent to the inactive member notifying him/her of pending church action. If the inactive member continues to neglect regular attendance by the

next quarterly or annual membership meeting, a majority vote of the voting members present at the meeting shall remove the person from membership. This process shall not apply to members who are facing extenuating circumstances or who are physically prevented from regular attendance.

2. Any member who willfully rejects any element of this constitution, or sows discord in the church, or whose conduct damages the name of Christ and the testimony of the church, shall be contacted by an elder. If repeated attempts to resolve the situation prove fruitless, the elder(s) shall inform the congregation and a letter shall be sent to the member notifying him/her of pending church action. If the situation remains unresolved by the next quarterly or annual membership meeting, a majority vote of the voting members present at the meeting shall remove the person from membership.

Section 3: Transfer of Membership

Any member in good standing who desires to transfer his/her membership to another church of like faith and practice shall be granted a letter of recommendation from the clerk to the new church, upon recommendation of the elder(s).

Section 4: Reinstatement to Membership

Any person who has been disciplined from the church, or who has transferred membership to another church, may be reinstated to membership at this church by following the admissions process outlined in Article VII.

ARTICLE IX: OFFICERS

Section 1: Elders

1. Senior Pastor

a. **Qualifications.** The senior pastor shall be a man called of God and in full agreement with the constitution of this church. He shall meet the requirements of 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

b. **Election.** The senior pastor shall be chosen by a three-fourths vote of the voting members present at a regularly or specially called membership meeting.

c. **Duties.** The senior pastor shall perform all the duties usually incumbent upon his office as a responsible shepherd of the church. He shall preach and teach the Bible, administer the ordinances, oversee the ministries of the church, minister to the individual and family needs of the congregation, devote himself to prayer, serve as a voting member on all committees and organizations of the church, provide direction to the associate

pastor(s), and act as moderator of all membership meetings unless otherwise directed by this constitution or ordered by vote of the membership.

d. Term of office. The senior pastor shall continue in his office until he resigns, or his resignation is requested by the church. If the senior pastor resigns, he must give a minimum of thirty-days notice before terminating his duties. His written resignation shall be given to the chairman of the deacons. The senior pastor's resignation may be requested by the membership at a regularly or specially called membership meeting, provided that announcement was given for two Sundays prior to the meeting. The vote shall require fifty percent of the membership to constitute a quorum, with a seventy-five percent vote of the voting members present to remove the senior pastor from office.

e. Compensation. The senior pastor's compensation package shall be reviewed annually by the deacons, with their recommendations presented to the membership for approval as part of the church budget at the annual membership meeting.

2. Associate Pastors

a. Qualifications. Associate pastors shall be men called of God and in full agreement with the constitution of this church. They shall meet the requirements of 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

b. Election. Associate pastors shall be chosen by a three-fourths vote of the voting members present at a regularly or specially called membership meeting.

c. Duties. Associate pastors shall assist the senior pastor in the performance of his regular duties, including assistance with preaching and teaching, administering the ordinances, overseeing the ministries of the church, and ministering to the individual and family needs of the congregation. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the associate pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties. Upon the death or resignation of the senior pastor, the associate pastor(s) shall organize a pastoral search committee, which shall consist of the associate pastor(s), the deacons, and at least three additional church members selected by the congregation at regularly or specially called membership meeting.

d. Term of office. Associate pastors shall continue in their office until they resign, or their resignation is requested by the church. If an associate pastor resigns, he must give a minimum of thirty-days' notice before terminating his duties. His written resignation shall be given to the chairperson of the deacons. An associate pastor's resignation may be requested by the membership at a regularly or specially called membership meeting, provided that announcement has been given for two Sundays prior to the meeting. The vote shall require fifty percent of the membership to constitute a quorum, with a seventy-five percent vote of the voting members present to remove an associate pastor from office.

e. Compensation. The associate pastors' compensation package shall be reviewed annually by the deacons, with their recommendations presented to the membership for approval as part of the church budget at the annual membership meeting.

Section 2: Deacons

1. Qualifications. Deacons shall be expected to meet the requirements of 1 Tim. 3:8-13 and be in full agreement with the constitution of this church. They shall be persons who have proven themselves faithful as exemplified by regular attendance at church services, financial support of the church as capable, and willingness to serve unselfishly to meet the practical needs of others.

2. Election. Deacons shall be chosen by three-fourths vote of the voting members present at a regularly or specially called membership meeting. The number of deacons shall be determined by majority vote of the currently-serving elder(s) and deacons in conference. The deacons shall elect a chairperson to serve as liaison to the elder(s) and moderator of membership meetings in the elder(s)' absence, unless otherwise ordered by vote of the membership.

3. Duties. Deacons shall act as servants of the church and assistants to the elder(s). Their work shall consist of the following responsibilities:

a. They shall be responsible for the collection and deposit of the weekly offering.

b. They shall, along with the elder(s) and treasurer, prepare an annual budget to be presented to the membership for approval at the annual membership meeting.

c. They shall have authority to authorize necessary expenditures not accounted for in the church budget, not to exceed \$4,000, and subject to a majority vote. Expenditures exceeding \$4,000 shall be presented to the membership for approval at a regularly or specially called membership meeting.

d. They shall have the responsibility to dispense at their own discretion, in advisement with the elder(s), the Benevolence Fund.

e. They shall be responsible for the care and maintenance of all church property, which includes oversight of the church's custodial staff.

f. If the church finds itself without any elders, the deacons shall organize a pastoral search committee, which shall consist of the deacons and at least three additional church members selected by the congregation at a regularly or specially called membership meeting. It shall be the committee's duty to secure possible candidates for the pastorate and to arrange an opportunity for the congregation to hear the candidates preach. They shall properly investigate each candidate's qualifications, doctrinal beliefs, and practices, and report thereon to the congregation. Only one pastoral candidate shall be presented to the membership at a time for acceptance or rejection.

g. They shall perform any other duties assigned to them in the succeeding paragraphs of this constitution.

4. Term of office. Each deacon shall serve a four-year term. There shall be no limit as to the number of terms a deacon may be elected. Any deacon desiring to resign from office before the end of a term must tender a letter of resignation to the senior pastor or deacon chairperson. A deacon who is deemed unable or unwilling to fulfill all the responsibilities of the office may be removed by majority vote of the elder(s) and deacons in conference.

5. Confidentiality. It shall be understood among the deacons that the contents of their conversations with the elder(s) and each other on all sensitive matters (such as Benevolence Fund disbursements) shall be kept completely confidential. This includes discussions with family members, other church members, and any individuals not holding church membership. This confidentiality shall be maintained even after a deacon's time in office has expired.

ARTICLE X: ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

Section 1: Qualifications

1. The administrative positions of this church shall include the treasurer, financial secretary, church clerk, and church auditors. Qualified persons shall be regular members who exhibit the necessary skills for the positions and who demonstrate a willingness to serve. They shall be nominated by a committee consisting of the elder(s), deacons, and three additional church members, and appointed by a majority vote of the voting members present at the annual membership meeting. Deacons may be nominated to serve in any of the administrative positions, but no deacon may hold more than one position at a time.

2. Persons elected to administrative positions who are deemed unable or unwilling to fulfill their duties may be immediately removed and replaced by majority vote of the deacons, but the deacons' choice shall be subject to the approval of the membership at the next annual membership meeting.

Section 2: Treasurer

The treasurer's responsibilities shall include, but are not limited to, paying all the bills and salaries of the church, counting the weekly offering, keeping documentation of all payments and expenses, presenting financial reports at the deacons' and membership meetings, and providing additional reports on the finances of the church as requested by the elder(s) or deacons. The treasurer shall remain in office until age, health, or other factors render the individual unable to serve in this capacity. The treasurer shall give a minimum of thirty-days notice before termination of duties. A written resignation shall be given to the senior pastor or chairman of the deacons.

Section 3: Financial Secretary

The financial secretary's responsibilities shall include, but are not limited to, assisting the treasurer in the counting of weekly offerings, keeping an accurate record of individual contributors and their contributions, and presenting contributors with an annual statement of receipts which shall serve as documentation for individual tax purposes. The financial secretary shall remain in office until age, health, or other factors render the individual unable to serve in this capacity. The financial secretary shall give a minimum of thirty-days notice before termination of duties. A written resignation shall be given to the senior pastor or chairman of the deacons.

Section 4: Church Clerk

The church clerk's responsibilities shall include, but are not limited to, keeping the minutes of all membership meetings, signing official documents of the church as requested by the elder(s) or deacons, and keeping an accurate membership roll. The clerk shall keep all church records in either hard copy or electronic storage. All records are the property of the church. The clerk shall remain in office until age, health, or other factors render the individual unable to serve in this capacity. The clerk shall give a minimum of thirty-days notice before termination of duties. A written resignation shall be given to the senior pastor or chairman of the deacons.

Section 5: Church Auditors

The church auditors' responsibilities shall include, but are not limited to, examining all church financial records at least once per year, and at any other time as requested by the elder(s) or deacons. The auditors' annual examination shall occur just prior to the annual membership meeting. A written report shall be offered to the congregation at the annual meeting stating the judgment of the auditors as to the integrity of the church's financial records. The auditors shall serve two-year terms. There shall be no limit as to the number of terms an auditor may serve. The number of auditors shall be determined by the deacons.

ARTICLE XI: COMMITTEES

Section 1: Purpose

Committees may be established as needed to complete specific tasks for the elder(s), deacons, or congregation. These may be established as standing committees (which will have perpetual responsibilities in the church), or as ad-hoc committees (which will be assigned specific short-term projects). In all cases, committees must be proposed by the elder(s) and approved by majority vote of the voting members present at any membership meeting and may only be dissolved by majority vote of the voting members present at a membership meeting, upon the recommendation of the elder(s).

Section 2: Chairperson Responsibilities

Committee chairpersons shall be responsible for ensuring the timely execution of their committees' duties and shall prepare written reports of their committees' activities for the quarterly and annual membership meetings.

Section 3: Terms of Service

The chairpersons of standing committees shall serve two-year terms, and there shall be no limit to the number of terms that they may serve. Chairpersons of ad-hoc committees shall serve until the work of their respective committees is deemed complete by the elder(s) and dissolved by the membership upon the elder(s)' recommendation.

Section 4: Removal of Committee Members

Any committee member who fails to fulfill his or her responsibilities may be removed or replaced by the committee chairperson. Chairpersons who fail to adequately fulfill their responsibilities may be replaced by the elder(s) and deacons meeting in conference, but the replacement shall be subject to membership approval at the next election.

Section 5: Committee Expenditures

For all committee purchases, a *Charge and Reimbursement Form* must be completed, signed by the committee chairman, and handed to the treasurer. Purchases which will exceed the committee's annual budget, or which will exceed the amount of \$500, shall require the unanimous approval of the deacons before the purchase may be made. Individual requests for reimbursement of purchases made on the church's behalf shall be subject to approval by the treasurer. If a reimbursement request is denied by the treasurer, an appeal may be made to the deacons and the matter will be decided by majority vote.

ARTICLE XII: CHURCH MEETINGS

Section 1: Regular Church Services

The regular services of the church shall be Sunday Morning Worship, Sunday School, Sunday Evening Worship, and Mid-Week Prayer and Bible Study. Additional services may be added but are subject to the approval of the elder(s).

Section 2: Regular Membership Meetings

1. The quarterly membership meetings of the church shall be held the last week of April, July, and October.
2. The annual membership meeting of the church shall be held the last week of January. The church year shall end December 31 of each year.

Section 3: Other Membership Meetings

1. Special Meetings. Special membership meetings may be called by the elder(s) or deacons provided that notice of such meetings has been posted for two Sundays prior to the meeting and announced at all regular services during that period. The specific agenda item for the meeting shall be included in the announcements and postings.
2. Closed Meetings. Closed membership meetings may be called by the elder(s) or deacons when the agenda item is of a sensitive nature, and provided that notice of such meetings has been posted for two Sundays prior to the meeting and announced at all regular services during that period. The specific agenda item for the meeting shall not be disclosed until the meeting is called to order and non-members are dismissed.

Section 4: Procedures

All membership meetings shall follow the procedures outlined in *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Section 5: Quorum

Except where otherwise stipulated in this constitution, a quorum at any membership meeting shall require twenty-five percent of all regular members, with a majority vote of the voting members present deciding all matters.

Section 6: Use of Paper Ballots

A voice vote of the membership shall normally be acceptable for deciding matters at membership meetings. However, the purchase or sale of items exceeding \$4,000 shall require a written ballot and the recommendation of the deacons before a congregational vote may be taken. Additionally, the election of officers, administrative personnel, and committee chairmen shall require the use of paper ballots.

ARTICLE XIII: AMENDMENTS

Section 1

This constitution may be amended at any annual membership meeting by a seventy-five percent vote of the voting members present at the meeting, provided that the amendment(s) have been posted or otherwise made available to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

Section 2

All former bylaws and constitutions of the church are hereby repealed by this action of the church, and these bylaws and constitution are hereby adopted.

ARTICLE XIV: DISSOLUTION

Section 1

No part of the net earnings of this corporation (Grace Baptist Church of Marshall, MI) shall ever insure to the benefit of any donor, member, director, or officer of the corporation, or to any private individual. No donor, member, director, or officer of the corporation, or any private individual, will be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporation. No private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporation's assets.

Section 2

Upon dissolution, any assets of the corporation shall be donated to the religious organization(s) nominated by the elder(s) and deacons in conference and approved by majority vote of the voting members present at any regularly or specially called membership meeting.