

CONSTITUTION
OF GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
OF MILFORD, OHIO

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Preamble

Having by faith accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and being committed to upholding the truth of the inspired and infallible Word of God, we have voluntarily affiliated ourselves with one another as a body of baptized believers in keeping with Christ's mission to build His body, the Church. We desire to govern ourselves according to Scripture under the headship of Christ, and we desire to function with transparency, wisdom, unity, and order. To help achieve these ends, we adopt this constitution.

Article I: Organization

Section 1: Name

The name of this local church shall be Grace Bible Church of Milford (GBC).

Section 2: Purpose

The purpose of this local church shall be to glorify God by:

- Giving careful attention to the Word of God through public and individual instruction, making application to personal daily living, and providing encouragement to one another in living according to biblical principles by the grace of God and through the power of His Holy Spirit;
- Maintaining a unified community of believers through the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper and engaging in harmonious spiritual fellowship, corporate prayer, and service to one another to meet spiritual, emotional, and physical needs;
- Sharing the Gospel in our local and global communities through faithful evangelism of those in our immediate spheres of life (family members, co-workers, neighbors, local acquaintances, etc.), supporting church plants, and supporting foreign mission endeavors.

We therefore commit to:

- Equip believers to do the work of the ministry for the maturity, protection, and growth of the body,
- Exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as we gather in public worship,
- Establish churches of like faith and practice at home and abroad, and
- Earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Section 3: Voluntary Covenant

Members of Grace Bible Church, in an effort to display our commitment to the purposes and life of the church voluntarily and publicly affirm commitment to the following covenant. The covenant summarizes our individual testimony, our Scriptural goals, and our commitment to shared purposes.

Having by God's grace trusted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior,¹ we desire that Christ would be pleased and preeminent in all things,² that He would bless and use this church so that all praise and glory would be His,³ and that we are and will be complete in Him.⁴ Therefore, we do now, in the presence of God, His angels, and this assembly, solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.⁵

We will by God's grace seek to grow in our faith through the daily study of the Word and prayer.⁶ We will be separated unto God in our thoughts, desires, appearance, and activities, guarding ourselves against those things that are sinful, could tempt us to sin, or that do not promote or are not consistent with holiness.⁷ We will be witnesses for Jesus Christ by spreading the gospel and possessing a testimony that supports the gospel.⁸ We will make church attendance a priority, striving to attend as many of its services as possible.⁹ We will fulfill our family responsibilities, each doing his part to please Christ in our homes and to promote godliness.¹⁰ We will live godly lives among unbelievers and be good neighbors and citizens.¹¹

Furthermore, we will endeavor by the Spirit's help to uphold and promote the doctrines of this church and the public ministry of the Word. We will observe its ordinances and follow our ministry leadership.¹² We will serve the Lord faithfully, using the gifts and abilities He has given for the growth, edification, maturity, and protection of this body.¹³ We will pray regularly for the members and ministry of this church¹⁴ and faithfully, cheerfully, and proportionally give of our income to the Lord for the support of this church and the cause of Christ.¹⁵

At all times we will demonstrate toward each member Christian love, humility, patience, and concern in our attitudes, speech, and actions.¹⁶ We will partake of our mutual joys and

¹ Acts 13:48; Rom 10:9-10

² 2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:10; Col 1:10, 18

³ Eph 3:21

⁴ Col 1:28

⁵ Gal 6:1-5; Phil 1:27; Heb 3:12-13

⁶ Col 1:9-10a; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 5:11-14; 1 Pet 2:2; Jude 20-21

⁷ Rom 12:1-2; 13:14; Phil 4:8; 2 Tim 2:19; 1 Pet 1:14-16; 2:9-12

⁸ Acts 1:8; 2 Cor 5:11-21; Phil 2:14-16

⁹ Acts 2:42; Heb 10:25

¹⁰ Eph 5:22-6:4; Col 3:18-21

¹¹ Rom 13:1; Gal 6:10; Col 4:5; 1 Thes 4:11-12; 1 Tim 3:7

¹² Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 11:23-26; 16:16; 1 Thes 5:12-13; 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 4:1-5; Heb 13:17; Jude 3

¹³ Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:11-16; Tit 2:14; 1 Pet 4:11

¹⁴ Eph 6:18-20

¹⁵ 2 Cor 9:6-15; 3 Jn 5-8

¹⁶ Rom 12:15-16; 1 Cor 13:5-7; Phil 2:1-7; 1 Jn 2:9-11

sorrows, lovingly giving of our material substance for pressing needs.¹⁷ We will pursue those things that encourage believers to be faithful rather than trouble their consciences, disturb their faith, or cause them to sin.¹⁸ We will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other, frequently exhort one another, and as the case may require, faithfully warn, rebuke, and admonish one another with kindness and wisdom.¹⁹ When we receive correction from a brother in Christ, we will not reject or resent such but receive it with humility, careful self-examination, and necessary confession and repentance.²⁰ We will jealously guard the Spirit-given unity of this body, refusing to participate in or condone gossip, strife or dissension.²¹ In any personal disagreements or offenses, we will seek resolution and readily forgive each other rather than hold a grudge.²²

We will diligently learn God's will through his Word and our leaders' counsel in matters of doctrine and practice,²³ seeking their guidance if doubts arise regarding the ability to uphold this church's doctrines and covenant.²⁴ In the event we must move from this place, we will seek to unite with a church of like faith and practice, and if such a church does not exist, we will strive to begin such a work.

Section 4: Ordinances

GBC observes the two ordinances given by Christ and practiced by the apostles: believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both ordinances involve a symbolic preaching of the gospel and are best practiced in fellowship with other believers when the church family is gathered. Obedient believers practice both ordinances.

Believer's baptism involves those professing faith in Christ being publicly immersed in water as a Scriptural identification with Christ and His Body (Mathew 28:18-20). This Scriptural baptism need occur only once in a believer's life.

The Lord's Supper is a repeated ordinance available to all of God's children, who in careful self-examination, come before the Lord together to remember His death until He returns.

Section 5: Associations

¹⁷ Acts 2:44-45; 1 Cor 12:26; Js 2:14-17; 1 Jn 3:13-18

¹⁸ Rom 14:13, 19-20; 1 Cor 8:7-9, 12-13; 9:12; 10:23-33; Phil 2:1-4

¹⁹ Mt 18:15-16; Rom 15:14; Gal 6:1-2; 1 Thes 5:11, 14; Heb 3:13; 10:24-25; 12:12-13; Js 5:19-20

²⁰ Ps 32:3-5; Prov 3:11-12; 6:23; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5, 10, 12, 31-32; 25:12; 27:6; 28:13; 29:23; 1 Jn 1:9; Rev 2-3

²¹ Eph 4:1-6; Prov 11:13; 20:19; 2 Cor 12:20; Tit 2:3; Eph 4:29-32

²² Mt 5:23-24; 18:15; Rom 12:17-19; 1 Cor 6:1-8; 2 Cor 2:10-11; Eph 4:32; Js 5:9

²³ Prov 11:14; 19:20; Col 1:18; 2 Pet 1:3

²⁴ Amos 3:3; Acts 15:37-41

This church shall be an independent, autonomous church, subject only to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. It has the right to cooperate with other biblical groups but only on a voluntary basis as determined by its elders.

Article 2: Membership

Section 1: Reception of Members

Since we believe that a New Testament church is comprised of those who have embraced and been embraced by the Gospel, GBC desires to be comprised of members who are true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have been publicly immersed as believers in water baptism, who agree to uphold GBC's stated doctrines, who affirm a commitment to a life consistent with our church covenant (Article 1, Section 3), and who desire to enter into covenant with our members. The church leadership acknowledges the importance of taking time with prospective members to discuss these areas.

Section 2: Admission of Members

Any qualifying individual (Article 2, Section 1) making application for membership to GBC shall be unanimously recommended to the voting membership by the Pastor/Elders. The voting members shall have opportunity to hear the individual's public testimony of salvation, of baptism, and of his/her desire to voluntarily covenant with our members.

1. A majority vote of members present is required to approve an individual for membership. A membership vote may be held in a business meeting or in conjunction with a regularly scheduled service.
2. Members may be received:
 - a. By public testimony of salvation and Scriptural baptism either prior to or while attending GBC
 - b. By restoration after a season of discipline

Section 3: Dismissal of Members

Membership in GBC may be dissolved in one of the following ways:

1. By death
2. By letter of request from another ministry of similar faith and practice
3. By request of any member who wishes to formally withdraw membership
4. By erasure due to continuous absence from services for a period of six months (a member may become inactive without loss of membership if the sustained absence is due to schooling, work assignment, an extended ministry trip, etc.)
5. By excommunication through a church vote due to unresponsiveness to church discipline

Section 4: Discipline of Members

From a desire to maintain the purity of the church as Christ commands, a loving disciplinary process for a member, though painful for a church, may at times prove necessary. In an effort to restore a fallen brother or sister, members will be subject to the appeal of church family discipline if engaging in known sin without genuine repentance and the forsaking of that sin (e.g., engaging in immoral behavior, 1 Cor. 5:11), disturbing the church through slander, gossip, conspiracy, divisiveness, or other such practices (Rom. 16:17-18), or other such works of the flesh (Gal. 5:18-21).

The exact procedure, pace, and severity of discipline may vary according to the situation. The leadership will work together with discretion to follow and exhaust the Scriptural options for restoring a fallen member, and any private or public process will be for the purpose of appeal and restoration of that member.

Church family meetings for the purpose of discipline will be open only to members. Such meetings are subject to the rules for special meetings (Article 4, Section 2). Before being asked to take any disciplinary action, the church family shall hear all appropriate evidence that may be produced and a two-thirds majority vote of the members present will be required.

Section 5: Additional Membership Considerations

Only members shall be entitled to vote, hold office, or serve in leadership roles within the ministry of GBC.

Article 3: Church Government

Section 1: Form of Government

The government of this church is vested in its membership; therefore, its polity is congregational. The church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its only Head and the New Testament as its only infallible guide in matters of faith and government. The congregation is guided and led by its Pastor(s) and Elders. Deacons assist the Elders in varying ways, especially providing administrative oversight to the members' ministry to each other.

Section 2: Officers of the Church

1. Classification of Offices: The officers shall be composed of the following and shall be elected by the congregation from its membership as the need may arise and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Scripturally Designated Offices
 - 1) Elder
 - a) Pastor(s) – elders who preach, teach, provide ministry vision, and give pastoral care (a pastor may be chosen from outside the membership, but would join as part of his installation)
 - b) Elder(s) – who administrate, teach, and pastor

- 2) Deacon(s) – to assist the elders’ administration, to facilitate brotherly care and facility stewardship ministries
 - b. Other Offices
 - 1) Treasurer
 - 2) Clerk
2. Election of Officers: The officers shall be elected by the vote of the membership in such a manner as the Lord may direct and the pastor and/or elders and people agree.

The church leadership may deem it appropriate to recommend policy regarding a specific number of elders or deacons, defining terms of service for elected offices, or requiring a rotation of officers.

3. Church Ministries: Formal ministries consistent with the purposes of GBC shall be established under the authority and direction of the elders.

Section 3: Qualifications of Officers

1. Elders and Deacons: The officers appointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) and set apart by the church (Acts 6:3-6; 14:23) to perform the duties He has entrusted to them are elders and deacons.
- a. Officers shall be elected from among the members who give evidence of the qualifications specified in the Word of God.
 - 1) Spirit-given gifts (Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40; Ephesians 4:1-16)
 - 2) Moral and spiritual character (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11)
 - 3) Only men are to serve in these offices (Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9)
 - b. Our understanding of a “one-woman man” honors the covenant of marriage; therefore, we desire to limit these offices to those men who have not been divorced.
 - c. Each man must be willing and able to embrace the responsibilities of his role among our people and with the other leaders.
2. All other offices may be filled by any member in good standing.

Section 4: Responsibilities of Officers

1. Responsibilities of elders
- a. The elders are to exercise careful watch over the souls of the flock (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2), oversee the administration and ministries of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1; 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2), lead the flock by an example of surrendered service to the Lord (1 Peter 5:1-3), preach and teach the whole counsel of God (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2), devote themselves to prayer (Acts 6:4), equip the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12), train future pastors (2 Timothy 2:2), and do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5).

- b. One elder shall serve as senior pastor, shall be responsible for the services of the church, and may serve as the moderator of all meetings of the elders and of the church family (except for meetings on his dismissal, salary, etc.). He will supervise all volunteer and paid personnel of the church and its ministries and shall be responsible, with the counsel of the elders, for the hiring, management, and dismissal of those personnel.

2. Responsibilities of deacons

- a. Deacons provide spiritually minded oversight to appointed areas of need in church life in ways that enable the elders to focus on their respective ministries. In Acts 6, deacons were chosen to resolve a controversy in the care of the needy within the congregation (Acts 6:1-3) in a way that enabled the pastors to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4).
- b. The deacons may serve in tandem with the elders at times and will always function under the elders' oversight.

3. Responsibilities of treasurer

The treasurer shall receive and disburse all monies as directed by the church, maintaining clear, accurate, and permanent records of all receipts and disbursements and present quarterly and annual financial reports to the church leadership and to the church family.

4. Responsibilities of clerk

The clerk shall keep an accurate and permanent record of all church meetings, baptisms, and membership roll, and may perform other duties as needed.

Section 5: Committees

Committees may be appointed by the pastor or elders for whatever purpose and duration necessary.

Pulpit Committee

The elders of GBC shall serve as its pulpit committee, or the elders may constitute a committee to include elders and deacons. The purpose of the committee is to supervise the church in the call of a pastor and to secure pulpit supply in the interim.

Article 4: Meetings

Section 1: Public Worship

Services shall be held on Sunday for fulfilling the purposes of this church. A weeknight service shall be held for prayer and Bible study. Other services shall be held as deemed appropriate by the pastor for purposes consistent with the objectives of this church.

Exceptions to this plan shall be allowed (with careful consideration) for occasional events and holidays.

Section 2: Church Family Stewardship Meetings

The church family will meet regularly to talk about our stewardship of church family matters or to transact business on behalf of the church. Unless otherwise stipulated in this constitution, major decisions regarding the business of this church (such as expenditures and acceptance of members) shall be decided by a majority vote of a quorum of members.

Quarterly Stewardship Meetings

The business of the church shall be transacted by the congregation in its quarterly business meetings in January, April, July, and October. The January meeting will endeavor to review the previous year and to prepare for the new year's ministry. Interim business shall be transacted by the elders, except in such cases as should require special sessions of the congregation. The recommendations of the elders shall be subject to the entire body.

Budget Stewardship Meeting

An annual church meeting shall be held in December to adopt a proposed budget for the next calendar year. The budget shall be proposed by the elders and deacons and shall be posted or provided to the church two Sundays prior to the meeting.

Special Stewardship Meetings

Other stewardship meetings may be called by the elders and deacons, or by a written request to the elders and deacons of any five unrelated voting members of the church. The membership will be notified of the time and purpose of such meetings at least two weeks prior to the meeting. No other business shall be transacted in such a meeting.

Quorum

At any congregational business meeting (regular and special), fifty percent of the voting membership shall constitute a quorum. Only members seventeen years of age or older are eligible to vote. Should a quorum not be present, the meeting may be recessed until a quorum can be present.

Moderator

The senior pastor or a representative of the elders shall moderate all church meetings.

Section 3: Rules of Order of Business

The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern church business meetings to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the church may adopt.

Article 5: Finances

Section 1: Offerings

Regular offerings shall be received for the Lord's work at GBC. Special offerings may be taken at the direction of the elders.

Section 2: Allocations

Funds received through GBC will be allocated according to an annual budget adopted by the church in December. The annual budget may be adjusted at any time during the year as the Lord supplies and the need arises, upon approval by the church of recommendations from the elders. All undesignated gifts to GBC shall be used to fulfill budgetary commitments. All designated gifts and special offerings will be used either as designated or will be offered to be returned to the donor.

Article 6: Licensing and Ordination

Any male person, who is a member of GBC, giving evidence of a divine call to the gospel ministry by the possession of gifts and graces belonging to the ministry and accepting without reservation the Confession of Faith of GBC may be licensed or ordained to preach by the congregation at any regular or called meeting of the church upon a majority vote of the voting members present. In case of ordination, an ordination council comprised of the elders of GBC, ordained ministers who are part of GBC, and any other ordained ministers whom the elders under the direction of the Holy Spirit consider wise to invite, shall thoroughly examine the candidate for ordination regarding his doctrinal soundness, moral and spiritual qualifications, personal fitness, and spiritual gifts.

Article 7: Property and Assets

Section 1: Legal Provisions

This church shall have the right to own, buy, or sell tangible properties, both real and personal, in its own name and through properly elected officers, when authorized by a two-thirds majority vote of the church.

No profit shall ever accrue to the benefit of any individuals from the assets, holdings, or other transactions in which this church may become involved.

Section 2: Dissolution

In the event of the dissolution of this church, all of its debts shall be fully satisfied. None of its assets or holdings shall be divided among the members or other individuals but shall be

irrevocably designated by a two-thirds majority vote prior to dissolution to such other nonprofit religious corporations as are in agreement with the letter and spirit of the Statement of Faith of this church.

Article 8: Amendments

This Constitution may be amended, altered, or revised at any business meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting. The membership shall be publicly informed of the proposed change(s) at least one month prior to the meeting.