



GfBC
Grace Family Baptist Church

Church Bylaws

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Article I - Congregational Meetings

Section 1 - Notice of Meetings.

Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services on the two successive Sundays immediately prior to the meeting. In an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each local member by mail of the time, place and purpose of the congregational meeting.

Section 2 - Annual and Semi-Annual Meetings.

Congregational meetings shall be held semi-annually for the reception of reports, election of officers, and the transaction of such other business as may properly be brought before the meeting. The fall congregational meeting shall be called the Annual Meeting. The adoption of a budget shall take place at the Annual Meeting.

Section 3 - Method of Calling Meetings.

It shall be the right and responsibility of the Elders to call all congregational meetings. A written request to call a congregational meeting, stating clearly its purpose, signed by fifteen members of the church in good and regular standing and presented to the Clerk, shall require the Elders to call such a meeting. When special congregational meetings are called, there must be notice given to the congregation as to the purpose.

Section 4 - Responsibility for Meetings.

The Elders shall arrange the details of all congregational meetings and see that all possible preparation for their successful conduct is made following the principles outlined in Robert's Rules of Order, Revised.

Section 5 - Quorum for Transaction of Business.

The members present at any constitutionally called congregational meeting shall be considered a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 6 - Congregational Affirmation

A. Purpose of Congregational Affirmation

The purpose of an affirmation from the congregation, deacons or any other group of the church is the wisdom of seeking godly counsel of many as taught in Scripture (Prov 11:14). This type of counsel can be helpful to the elders in determining the wisest course of action in a matter. A vote of affirmation may be for the purpose of polling the congregation or may be a binding agreement.

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B. Types of Affirmations

1. Written Affirmation:

A ballot vote of eligible members present at a meeting called for the specific purpose of affirming a decision on a particular matter. The meeting shall be called by the elders and publicly announced at least two weeks prior to the meeting. The results of all Written Affirmations will be made public.

2. Formal Affirmation:

A vote taken using any method desired by the elders for the purpose of polling the counsel of the congregation or a leadership group (i.e. deacons, teachers, etc.) on any matter.

3. General Consent

In the case of nomination of deacons and elders, members have an opportunity to bring their concerns to the candidate and/or elders in accordance with Matthew 18. Therefore, it is assumed that any candidacy that continues to the time of affirmation has received general consent.

C. Eligible Members

A church member in good standing is eligible to cast a ballot in formal affirmations when he or she is present.

Article II - Membership

Section 1 - Application for Membership at GfBC.

All requests for membership shall be made to the Elders. Upon making such a request, the person shall be enrolled in a membership class covering both the LBC1689 and our Church Structure. The applicant will be given an interview form (Appendix 1) and a copy of the Church Covenant (See Constitution Appendix 2) which will both be submitted to the Elders. An Elder shall meet with the applicant following receipt of said forms to discuss membership. Final approval for membership will be decided by the Elders.

Section 2 - Denial of Membership.

If, upon review of an interview for membership or after meeting with a prospective member, the Board of Elders determines that there is a lack of evidence of conversion, an unwillingness to follow the Lord in baptism, an unwillingness to walk peaceably within the standards of our confession, or there are unresolved issues with a prior church, membership shall be denied.

Section 3 - Admission of Applicants.

Applicants approved for membership shall present themselves at a worship service designated by the Elders, at which service such applicants shall publicly affirm their faith in Jesus Christ, covenant with the Body, and be publicly acknowledged as members by the Church.

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Section 4 - Discipline of Members

The purpose of Church Discipline is to effect a return to a Biblical standard of behavior and doctrine in a member who errs (Galatians 6:1), to maintain purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6-7), and to deter sin (1 Timothy 5:20) in order to reflect the glory of God and His holy character (John 15:8; 1 Peter 2:12).

Members of this church who espouse heresy or engage in gross misconduct shall be subject to discipline potentially resulting in dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18. Before such dismissal however, 1) it shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring member's false doctrine, heresy, or gross misconduct to warn and to correct such erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If said erring member does not heed this warning, then 2) the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two witnesses to warn and correct such erring member, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If said erring member still refuses to heed this warning, then 3) it shall be brought to the attention of the Elders as representatives of the Church. Should the individual remain unrepentant, the Elders, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall inform the body. If said erring member refuses to heed the warning of the Church, 4) he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the Church. It is understood that this process will continue to conclusion even if the erring member leaves the Church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership to avoid discipline. If said member, after dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement, 5) he or she shall be publicly restored to membership. 6) Every member is bound morally and Scripturally to uphold the decision of the church.

Section 5 - Appeals

If any member or members are injured in or by any proceedings in censures or formal discipline not agreeable to truth or order, they may appeal the decision of the church to the Elders of another church that holds our same confession. Those Elders may hear the appeal and give advice in or about that matter to the Elders of GfBC. However, the Elders of the appealed-to church are not entrusted with any authority over the body of GfBC, to impose their determination on the Church or Officers. [LBC1689 26:15]

Section 6 - Termination of Membership

The Church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death, or after he or she has joined with another evangelical church. Membership may also be terminated as an act of exclusion for those who are habitually absent from the stated Lord's Day meetings of the Church without just cause (this shall be determined by the Elder body), or by an act of excommunication through Church Discipline as specified in Article Two, Section 4 of these Bylaws.

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Article III - Election/Appointment of Church Officers

Section 1 - Terms of Office

The terms of church officers shall begin upon their ordination and installation. The term of office for an elder shall be as long as he is qualified, capable, and desirous of fulfilling the duties of an elder. The normal term of office for deacons shall be 3 years. Upon the completion of a full term each deacon shall be required to wait one year before being eligible for reappointment. This requirement may, however, be set aside if the elders deem it beneficial to do so. Terms shall be so arranged that not all are completed at the same time.

Section 2 - Nomination of Deacons

All deacons shall have been a member of the church for a period of at least one year before being placed in nomination. Consent must be secured from the nominees before their names are placed before the congregation. Six weeks prior to each semiannual meeting, a nomination form will be presented to the church body. This form shall include the Biblical requirements for the office of Deacon.

It shall be the duty of the membership to review the requirements for Deacons (*Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Constitution Article 5, Section 2*), and then to select male members to recommend to the Elders for entrance into the Deacon Training Program. Recommendations may be made from any member of the church provided it is done so in writing and with the prior approval of the individual being recommended.

The Elders shall take those recommendations and compile a list of qualified nominees and announce those nominees for said office two Sundays prior to a semi-annual congregational Meeting. Members of the congregation may present names in writing to the Elders for consideration prior to the time the names of nominees are posted.

If there are those in the congregation who have Scriptural grounds for objecting to any of the nominees, they shall personally bring these to the attention of the nominee (Matthew 18:15-17). If those concerns are not satisfied, they should then bring those concerns to the attention of the Elders at least one week prior to the congregational meeting.

At the congregational meeting the Elders will present the nominees to the congregation for the proper action. Each nominee shall be affirmed by general consent.

Nominees who are appointed will enter the Deacon Training Program and will serve as Deacons in training until their successful completion, affirmation, and ordination by the Elders.

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Section 3 - Appointment of Elders¹

A. Elder Selection Process From Within The Congregation

The process by which elders are nominated and appointed to the body of elders is as follows:

1. The elders shall set aside men that they determine have met the qualifications and gifting of the office of elder. They shall be declared as being under consideration.
2. The elders shall then make it known to the church that a particular individual is being considered as a candidate for the office of elder.
3. For a period of time, not less than twenty-eight (28) days (4 weeks), the congregation will have the opportunity to prayerfully consider the individual's qualifications for the office of elder. If members for any reason feel that the person may be unqualified, they should go to him in love and discretion and privately discuss their concerns (Matt 18:15-18, Titus 1:7). If after a discussion with the nominee, the members feel that their concern is unresolved, then they should approach the elders with their concern. During the time that a man is under consideration, there are several options:
 - a. Option 1: The man under consideration can withdraw himself from consideration and the process will cease.
 - b. Option 2: The elders may deem the man unqualified and the process will cease.
 - c. Option 3: The man and the elders agree that the process should continue.
4. After the time of consideration, the general consent of the congregation regarding the man under consideration will be affirmed during an annual, semi-annual, or special called business meeting.
5. After prayerful consideration of the consent of the congregation, the elders shall vote and make known their decision regarding the man.
6. Upon elder body approval, the elders will arrange for his ordination if necessary and the man shall immediately assume his position as an elder.

B. Elder Selection Process From Outside The Congregation

It may be necessary on occasion and for the benefit of the body to find an Elder from outside the congregation of GfBC.

The elder body shall select the elder as follows:

1. The elders shall serve as the elder search council.
2. Upon the recommendation of the elders and the approval of a specific candidate, the elder body shall make known to the congregation all pertinent information about the candidate.

¹ In the case of a single elder or other extenuating circumstances, the elder shall consult with elders of another church holding to our confession.

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3. A business meeting shall be set and announced publicly at least twenty-eight (28) days (4 weeks) prior to a public affirmation when a candidate is coming to be considered as an elder.
4. Any elder candidate must have the opportunity to fulfill “pulpit supply” as a candidate.
5. At the business meeting, the elders shall seek the general consent affirmation of the congregation.
6. After consideration of the affirmation of the congregation, the elder body shall make the final decision regarding the candidate. Upon approval of the elder body, the man shall become an elder. The elder body shall announce to the church the date that the new elder’s tenure shall begin.

Section 4 - Number of Elders

The number of elders shall be as many as are qualified and needed to carry out the ministry of elders in the church. The elder body shall determine that number.

Section 5. Elder Body Meetings

Meetings of the elder body shall be held on a regular basis as determined by the elders. Anyone desiring to approach the elders on any matter or need may feel free to arrange to meet with them. Any elder may call special meetings of the elder body as needed, but all elders must be informed about the meeting and the subject matter to be discussed in advance. All major decisions require all elders to be informed and included in the decision whether by physical presence, phone, or submitted letter.

Section 6 - Elder Body Decision-Making Process

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration in a spirit of humility, with each elder regarding one another before himself. A matter receiving a unanimous “yes” vote is a “yes” decision. A matter in which the elders are not able to come to a unanimous agreement must be tabled for discussion at a later date.

Before the next meeting, additional information, discussion, Godly counsel, and time as needed, will be allowed to go over the matter at hand. After considering the additional information, discussion, and counsel, the elders will then allow the time needed for prayer.

The decision will then be made with a simple majority vote. If there is no majority, the matter will not move forward.

Statement of unity: Any decision made after following the agreed upon decision-making process will be a unified “yes” or “no” decision. All elders agree to be unified in the final decision, “yes” or “no,” in public and in private, even though it may not agree with their personal preference (Acts 15:6-22).

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Section 7 - Special Decisions

The following decisions require a binding, written affirmation (See Article 1, Section 6) of the congregation (Prov 11:14):

1. The church's annual budget
2. Expenditures involving new property or new buildings and related indebtedness
3. Changes to the Charter, Constitution and/or bylaws

Section 8 - Removal of Elders

Any elder may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established by the remainder of the elder body. Any accusation or action against an elder must be presented to the elder body in accordance with Scripture (I Tim 5:19-20).

In the case of intractable differences between the elders (or between a single elder and the body), the elders are bound by chapter XXVI.15 of our confession to seek the advice of elders of a church holding to our confession.

Section 9 - Approved Teachers

Although it be incumbent on the Bishops or Pastors [i.e., Elders] of the Churches to be instant in Preaching the Word, by way of Office; yet the work of Preaching the Word, is not so peculiarly confined to them; but that others also gifted, and fitted by the Holy Spirit for it, and approved, and called by the Church, may and ought to perform it. [LBC1689 XXVI.11]

Article IV - Church Administration²

Section 1 - Meetings

Deacons shall hold their respective meetings monthly.

Section 2 - Quorum and Call for Meetings

The quorum of the Elders or of the Deacons shall be two-thirds of their total number. They shall meet at the request of any two of their members.

Section 3 - Duties of the Church Clerk

The Clerk shall keep a record of all business transacted at the congregational meetings, keep an accurate record of the membership, keep an updated attendance record, carry on all necessary and related correspondence for the congregation, and handle other duties as assigned by the Elders.

² Any person serving in an official capacity at GfBC, must be a member in good standing.

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Section 4 - Duties of the Church Treasurer

The Treasurer shall deposit all church funds in a bank account or accounts, as instructed by the Deacons and Elders, which account shall be opened and maintained in the name of the church. He shall disburse the same at the direction of the Elders. He shall make monthly reports to the Elders and an annual report to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. He shall submit his books for an annual audit at the end of the fiscal year, and at such other times as he may be directed by the Elders to do so. He may be required to furnish a bond, the amount of which shall be determined by the Elders, and the cost of which shall be paid by the church. The Treasurer shall be primarily responsible for all offerings received by the church, and immediately following any service he shall see that all offerings are counted and that a record of them is maintained. An assistant Treasurer may be appointed to assist in these duties.

Section 5. Committee Information

Elders may appoint special task committees or regular standing committees with rotating members as they determine it to be necessary.

The nature (special task or standing), the members, and the contact information for any existing committee must be available to the congregation.

Elders must appoint or dissolve any committee with a public announcement or written notification. Any committee must have one (1) chairperson and at least one (1) other member.

Frequency and location of committee meetings may vary according to the nature and purpose of the committee.

Committees are to directly report to the elder body and be available to be represented by a member of said committee in a congregational meeting.

Section 6. Regular Standing Committees

1. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee shall be comprised of the Elders, Treasurer, and three members of the congregation. Their duties include preparing and recommending to the congregation an annual budget. After it has been approved by the congregation, this committee is to oversee the administration of the budget. If any proposed expenditure goes over the budget category by 10% or more within a quarter, it requires unanimous approval of the Elders, Treasurer, and one other committee member.

2. Missions Committee

The Missions Committee shall be comprised of the Elders and up to three additional members. Their duties shall include leading the church into supporting and participating in responsible missionary activities and efforts.

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3. Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee will be comprised of the Chairman of the Deacons and three church members. Their duties include: 1) annually reviewing all elder and staff compensation; 2) recommending budget changes regarding staff to the finance committee; 3) reviewing and revising job descriptions to ensure clarity and consistency between staff members' performance and overseers' expectations. They are also responsible for the creation and updating of the GfBC Employee Handbook.

Article V - Legal Addendum

Due to changing circumstances in our culture, it is sometimes necessary to clarify certain issues.

1. In keeping with our constitution and our confession, we believe Scriptures define marriage as a covenantal union between one man and one woman. This means that marriage is the only legitimate and acceptable sexual relationship. We deny that the state has the authority to impose a definition of marriage that is in direct violation to the teaching of Scripture including, but not limited to, so-called same-sex marriage, polygamy, polyamory, incest, zoerasty, or cohabitation.
2. We reserve the right to host and perform wedding ceremonies only for those who are members of our church and/or willing to submit to the policies of the church as they relate to marriage.

Article VI - Amendments

For an amendment to the bylaws to be accepted, it must be adopted by a binding, written affirmation of a 2/3 majority of members present at a congregational meeting, provided that such amendments have been distributed by the Elders in written form at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

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Appendix 1

GfBC Membership Interview

Why did you leave your previous church?

Are your relationships at your previous church at peace as much as it depends on you?

Have you ever been under church discipline? How did you hear about GfBC?

Why did you choose GfBC?

After going through membership class and looking over the Historic Baptist Statements of Faith, are there any questions that still remain unanswered about GfBC?

Are you in substantial agreement with our doctrinal positions? Please explain your understanding of the gospel.

Who is Jesus Christ and what has He done?

Please share your testimony of how you were saved.

Are you willing to advance the cause of Christ through this church by your financial contributions, regular attendance and service?

Are you willing to faithfully pray for the people, ministries, and leadership of this church?

Are you willing to respect, support, cooperate with, obey and submit to the leadership of this church as they exercise their biblical responsibilities of shepherding the members of this church in accordance with Scripture?

Question for children desiring membership. Do you believe you are ready to accept all the responsibilities and privileges of church membership?

How can the elders of GfBC pray for you?

Applicant's Name (Printed) _____ Date _____

Applicant's Signature _____