

Book of Church Order

This Book of Church Order (BCO) supplements and amends our bylaws. The intention of this BCO is to detail how the ministry of this church is to be organized and governed.

MARCH 2018

- as approved by the Council of Elders and affirmed by the Congregation -

grace church
SAN DIEGO | EAST COUNTY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

USE OF TERMS	5
ARTICLE I. Articles of Faith	7
Section 1.01 Statement of Vision & Mission	7
Section 1.02 The Church of God under the Word of God	7
Section 1.03 Statement of Faith & Theological Distinctives.....	7
ARTICLE II. Name and Legal Status	8
Section 2.01 Legal Name	8
Section 2.02 Mailing Address / Office	8
Section 2.03 Non-profit Status	8
Section 2.04 Dissolution and Mergers	8
ARTICLE III. Membership	9
Section 3.01 Nature of Membership.....	9
Section 3.02 Requirements of Membership.....	9
Section 3.03 Encouragements to Members	10
Section 3.04 Role of / Involvement of the Congregation.....	10
Section 3.05 Votes of the Congregation.....	11
Section 3.06 Announcement of Members' Meetings.....	11
Section 3.07 Removal from Membership.....	11
ARTICLE IV. Leadership	13
Section 4.01 Council of Elders	13
Section 4.02 Qualifications for Elders	13
Section 4.03 Selection of Elders.....	13
Section 4.04 Duties of Elders.....	14
Section 4.05 Lead Elder / Pastor	14
Section 4.06 Use of an Interim Leadership Team	15
Section 4.07 Advisory Roles and Committees	15
Section 4.08 Other Roles and Committees	16
Section 4.09 Pastoral Positions on Staff.....	16
Section 4.10 Staff Elder Compensation.....	16
Section 4.11 Elder Term of Service	16
Section 4.12 Charges Against an Elder	17
Section 4.13 Removing an Elder for Non-Disciplinary Reasons.....	18
Section 4.14 Meetings of the Council of Elders.....	18
Section 4.15 Quorum and Passing Vote in the Council of Elders.....	19
ARTICLE V. Deacons and Other Leaders	20
Section 5.01 Purpose of Deacons	20
Section 5.02 Qualifications of Deacons.....	20
Section 5.03 Selection & Confirmation of Deacons	20
Section 5.04 Tenure of Deacons	20
Section 5.05 Other Ministry Leaders or Staff Members	21
Section 5.06 Resignation or Removal of Deacons, Ministry Leaders, or Staff Members.....	21

ARTICLE VI. Discipline of Members	22
Section 6.01 Purpose of Discipline.....	22
Section 6.02 Process of Discipline.....	22
Section 6.03 Grievances over Discipline.....	23
ARTICLE VII. Church Financial Stewardship	24
Section 7.01 Church Fiscal Year	24
Section 7.02 Financial Steward.....	24
Section 7.03 Duties of the Financial Steward	24
Section 7.04 Annual Budget.....	24
Section 7.05 Compensation.....	25
Section 7.06 Non-budgeted Financial Decisions.....	25
Section 7.07 Indemnification.....	25
ARTICLE VIII. Formal Affiliations	26
Section 8.01 Allowance for Formal Affiliations.....	26
Section 8.02 Entering Into or Ending a Formal Affiliation.....	26
ARTICLE IX. Resolving Grievances and Reconciling Conflicts	27
Section 9.01. Resolving Grievances and Conflicts in the Church.....	27
Section 9.02 Addressing Unresolved Grievances and Conflicts.....	27
Section 9.03 Goals for Grievance Resolution & Conflict Reconciliation	27
Section 9.04 Principles for Grievance Resolution & Conflict Reconciliation	28
Section 9.05 Process for Grievance Resolution & Conflict Reconciliation	29
ARTICLE X. Amendments and Adjustments to Bylaws or BCO	32
Section 10.01 Process for Amending Bylaws or BCO	32
Section 10.02 Governing Documents – Conflicts	32
APPENDIX I. Confessional Statement	33
APPENDIX II. Membership Agreement	38
APPENDIX III. Statement on Church Discipline	39
APPENDIX IV. Statement on Divorce and Remarriage	42
APPENDIX V. Elder Profile & Responsibilities	44
APPENDIX VI. Revision History	48

USE OF TERMS

Bylaws

The term “Bylaws” is used to refer to the structural and operational rules for the Corporation, as required by the State of California, which were adopted August, 2012, and any subsequent amendments, changes or modifications.

Church

The term “Church” or “church” is used to reference this specific local church: Grace Church of East County, and includes the definition of “Church” used in Section 1.1 of the Bylaws.

Congregation

The term “Congregation” is used in reference to the full roster of current, active church members.

Corporation

The term “Corporation” is used to refer to the legal business entity organized and existing under the laws of the State of California. While the Church may be a separate and distinct entity from the Corporation, the BCO recognizes that the Church also conducts business and/or operations by and through the Corporation, according to California corporate law.

Council of Elders

The term “Council of Elders” (cf. 1 Tim 4.14) describes the currently serving Elders collectively. The primary leadership of the church shall be vested in the Council of Elders, being responsible to oversee the ministry, teaching, membership, operations, and finances of the church. The Council of Elders also constitutes the Directors of the Corporation as set forth in the Bylaws.

Deacons

The term “Deacons” refers to those who serve the needs of the congregation, under the oversight of the Council of Elders, in matters such as: finances, ministries of mercy, or other areas of church life.

Elders

The term “Elders” refers to men of commendable character, who serve the Chief Shepherd – Jesus Christ. The Elders are called to “shepherd” (or “pastor”), which involves leading, teaching, and caring for the church on the foundation of the Word, with prayer.

Gathered Church / Congregation

The terms “Gathered Congregation” or “Congregation” are used to refer to the church’s members assembled and meeting for various purposes.

Interim Leadership Team

The term “Interim Leadership Team” designates any additional men appointed by the Elders (and affirmed by the Congregation) who serve when there are an insufficient number of elders comprising the Council of Elders.

Members

The term “Members” are those persons who complete the membership process delineated in this BCO, and are admitted to the church by the church’s Elders. Members of the Church are Members of the Corporation, to the extent set forth in this BCO.

Membership

The term “Membership” refers to the current, active Members of the Church collectively. Membership also refers to the Members’ membership in the Corporation with the rights specifically set forth in this BCO.

Members’ Meetings

The term “Members’ Meetings” refers to meetings the church will hold at least bi-annually to conduct specific church and Corporation business with the Membership.

Non-staff Elders

The term “Non-staff Elders” refers to those Elders who do not receive ongoing financial compensation from the church.

Staff Elders

The term “Staff Elders” refers to those Elder who do receive ongoing financial compensation for their labors.

ARTICLE I.

Articles of Faith

Section 1.01 Statement of Vision & Mission

Grace Church of East County exists to ***glorify God as a gospel-centered community on a gospel-centered mission***. Our chief aim in that vision by seeking to make and grow disciples of Jesus Christ in our church, city and world, by proclaiming his gospel, baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching all that Jesus has commanded.¹

Section 1.02 The Church of God under the Word of God

The church belongs ultimately to God, was purchased by the blood of Jesus², is led by the Holy Spirit, and exists for the glory of God. Jesus Christ is our head; our foundation; our apostle and high priest, our chief shepherd³. He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, and has pledged to be with his church always.⁴

As Christ rules over the universal church around the globe and across time, so he rules over particular churches, including this church. Today, Christ rules his church primarily by his Word, through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we submit to the final authority of the Bible as the Scriptures breathed out by God.⁵

Section 1.03 Statement of Faith & Theological Distinctives

The church has adopted a core Statement of Faith or “*Confessional Statement*” (Appendix I). The *Confessional Statement* for this church may be amended only by both a *unanimous vote* of the Council of Elders and a *two-thirds vote* of the Members of the church.

In addition, we have certain “*Theological Distinctives*”, as stated in our membership course (which is available on our website):

- *Baptistic* in our understanding and practice of the sacraments
- *Reformed* in our understanding of salvation
- *Continuationist* in our understanding of the Holy Spirit’s work today

Changes to these *Theological Distinctives* may be made only by *unanimous vote* of the Council of Elders and by a *two-thirds vote* of the members of the church

1 Matthew 28:16-20

2 Acts 20:28

3 Colossians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Hebrews 3:1, 1 Peter 5:4

4 Matthew 28:20

5 2 Timothy 3:16

ARTICLE II. Name and Legal Status

Section 2.01 Legal Name

The name of this church is **Grace Church of East County** (herein named, “church”).

Section 2.02 Mailing Address / Office

The mailing address of the church is: P. O. Box 247, La Mesa, CA 91944.

The Council of Elders shall have authority to change the mailing address and /or principal office from one location to another. They may also establish other offices at any place or places where the church is qualified under applicable law to conduct its business. The mailing address and / or office location will be published publicly on the church’s website.

Section 2.03 Non-profit Status

This church is a non-profit corporation under the laws of the state of California so long as such ruling remains valid and applicable to the church in accord with Scripture. The exemption is granted under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3).

Section 2.04 Dissolution and Mergers

The voluntary dissolution or merger of this church may happen by *a three-fourths vote* of the Council of Elders, as well as a *majority vote* of the Gathered Members of the church in a previously announced Members’ Meeting (announced with at least fourteen (14) days advance notice) having this purpose in view. A dissolution or merger of the church, shall result in a dissolution or merger of the Corporation, together with the distribution of any assets, as set forth herein, pursuant to California law.

In the event of a voluntary dissolution of the church, the net assets of the church shall be distributed to one or more non-profit organizations; the distribution shall be in accordance with a *three-fourths vote* of the Council of Elders (as noted above).

In the event of a merger with another church, then the net assets of the church shall be contributed to the surviving entity.

ARTICLE III.

Membership

Section 3.01 Nature of Membership

In the New Testament, individual believers join together as members of a particular body,⁶ as sheep in a particular flock,⁷ and as stones that construct God’s dwelling place.⁸ Accordingly, this church values and formally recognizes membership in this church body. Membership includes Members’ involvement in the business of the Corporation, as set forth herein.

Section 3.02 Requirements of Membership

The following represents the *requirements* to join as a member of this church and to remain as a member in good standing:

1. A credible profession of saving faith in Jesus Christ⁹
2. Be in substantial agreement with our “*Confessional Statement*” (Appendix I)¹⁰, and be able to be supportive of (i.e., not divisive over differences) our “*Theological Distinctives*”
3. Be baptized, if not already baptized, as expression of faith in Jesus (or be baptized at next available opportunity).¹¹
 - NOTE: for those who have been baptized as infants and would have a conviction of conscience against being baptized *again* as a believer, we do not wish to ask them to violate their conscience in this regard.
4. Gather regularly with this body by attending the Sunday service.¹²
5. Be willing to receive spiritual care from the elders, and be able to affirm the overall leadership of the elders.¹³
6. Complete the membership process as stipulated by the Council of Elders and signing the “Membership Agreement” (Appendix II). The elders may ask for permission to inquire with a prospective member’s previous church about how they left that church.
 - NOTE: the Membership agreement includes concurring with our *Statement on Church Discipline* (Appendix III) and our *Statement on Divorce and Remarriage* (Appendix IV).

⁶ Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12ff.; Ephesians 4:12-16

⁷ Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5

⁸ 1 Peter 2:4-5

⁹ Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13

¹⁰ By “substantial” agreement it is meant full agreement on all cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, but some lesser disagreements with the Confessional Statement may be admissible for membership.

¹¹ Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38, Roman 6:1-4

¹² Hebrews 10:25

¹³ Hebrews 13:17

In sum, members are expected to pursue a life “worthy of the gospel of Christ”¹⁴ as they submit to the teaching of Scripture. Such conduct includes the Spirit-empowered pursuit of personal holiness, relational harmony, church unity, and biblical fidelity.

The Council of Elders shall approve new members, whose membership shall commence upon approval. Subsequently, the Congregation shall welcome new Members with prayer. The list of Members shall be maintained and available as a *Membership Directory*. Children who are minors (under 18 years of age) in a Member’s household will be considered “Children of Members” and will also be listed on the Membership Directory.

Section 3.03 Encouragements to Members

In addition to those requirements for membership, we *encourage* further expressions of biblical Christianity as one participates in the life and ministry of this church - including:

1. Pray for the church and it’s ministry ¹⁵
2. Continue to attend Sunday services and members’ meetings on a regular basis ¹⁶
3. Find places of regular service in and through the church ¹⁷
4. Pursue expressions of community, particularly in one of our small groups ¹⁸
5. Give financially, as one is able, to the gospel ministry of this church ¹⁹
6. Seek to reach out to one’s network of relationships with the gospel of Jesus ²⁰

Section 3.04 Role of / Involvement of the Congregation

While the New Testament gives the elders the authority to lead the church²¹, it also pictures real congregational involvement in the affairs of the church. ²² Thus the Congregation will be genuinely involved in the affairs of the church, including through bi-annual Members’ Meetings for the purposes of:

- Affirmation of the annual budget and other significant, unplanned expenditures (*typically in a August / September Members’ Meeting*)
- Affirmation of those nominated to serve as Elders and Deacons (*typically, though not exclusively, in a February / March Members’ Meeting*)

Affirmation of the fiscal budget may be discerned by the Council of Elders through a variety of means – including: a formal ballot, an informal vote (e.g., showing of hands), or the lack of

¹⁴ Philippians 1:27

¹⁵ Matthew 6:7-13, Ephesians 6:18-20, Colossians 4:2-4, etc.

¹⁶ Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Hebrews 10:25

¹⁷ Ephesians 4:12-13, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Peter 4:10-11, etc.

¹⁸ Hebrews 3:12-13, Hebrews 10:24-25, etc.

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 2 Corinthians 9:9-15, Galatians 6:6, etc.

²⁰ Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Acts 8:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Peter 3:15-17

²¹ Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2

²² Matthew 18:17-18, Acts 6:3

voiced concerns on substantive issues. The fiscal budget will be provided to members at least two (2) weeks prior to such a Members' meeting. For the affirmation of new Elders, see Section 4.03. For the affirmation of new Deacons, see Section 5.03.

Section 3.05 **Votes of the Congregation**

The Congregation will also be formally involved in certain church decisions by a formal ballot being taken. The below issues will first be approved by the elders (in accordance with the noted sections of this BCO), and then brought to the congregation for a formal vote. Formal congregational votes will then be required for matters including:

- Approval of changes to our *Confessional Statement* or *Theological Distinctives* (see Section 1.03)
- Approval of a merger or the dissolution of the church (see Section 2.04);
- Approval of entering into or ending any formal affiliations (see Section 8.02)
- Approval of changes to our Bylaws or this BCO (see Section 10.01);
- Any other decisions in which the Council of Elders decides to call for a vote of the Congregation.

Subject to the discretion of the Council of Elders, Members must be present to vote. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast. Unless otherwise noted, a passing vote of the Gathered Congregation shall require a simple majority.

Section 3.06 **Announcement of Members' Meetings**

A minimum of fourteen (14) days advanced notice shall be given for a Members' Meeting or a voting meeting of the Congregation. Provided such notification, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those Members present. However, at their discretion the elders may provide a means for voting for those unable to attend (e.g., those deployed by the military, those unable to attend due to illness, etc.).

For issues involving a formal ballot, pertinent documentation will be provided at least fourteen (14) days in advance.

Section 3.07 **Removal from Membership**

The Council of Elders, with due process, may terminate a person's membership for any of the following reasons:

- The Member's request to resign from membership;
- Not participating in the fellowship and expectations of church membership for a period of three (3) or more months without understandable reasons;
- Transferring membership to another church (e.g. when moving to another area);

- A decision for removal by the Council of Elders based upon the Church Discipline process (as outlined in Article VI).

NOTE: The church will make every reasonable effort to contact, reach out to, and care for any non-participating members.

ARTICLE IV.

Leadership

Section 4.01 Council of Elders

The primary leadership of the church shall be vested in a Council of Elders.²³ The Council of Elders shall serve as the governing Board of Directors of the Corporation, with each Elder having equal authority. The Council of Elders shall collectively be responsible to oversee the ministry, teaching, membership, operations, and finances of the church.

There shall be at least five (5) Elders comprising the Council of Elders (if there are less than five Elders, see Section 4.06).²⁴

Section 4.02 Qualifications for Elders

To be considered for the office of Elder, a candidate must be a male²⁵ member in good standing of this church (including all expectations noted in Section 3.02). However, membership may be extended concurrently in some cases (see Section 4.09).

His character and gifts must consistently conform to the qualifications and responsibilities presented in Scripture, especially 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5.

He must be prepared to annually endorse the *Confessional Statement* in its entirety, as well as our *Theological Distinctives* (i.e., baptistic, reformed and continuationist - as noted in Article I). Should an Elder's settled convictions no longer be in accord with either the *Confessional Statement* or our *Theological Distinctives*, that elder must describe this change in writing within ninety (90) days to the Council of Elders.

Section 4.03 Selection of Elders

New Elders shall be identified and installed by the following process:

- The Council of Elders, prayerfully considering God's direction for identifying new Elders, shall regularly evaluate the church's needs and potential candidates (with due process) for eldership to help meet those needs.
 - NOTE: Members may also recommend candidates to the Council of Elders for consideration. An individual may also nominate himself for consideration.

²³ Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2

²⁴ It is acknowledged that this number (five minimum Elders) is arbitrary, yet we are seeking to apply principles of wisdom to this issue of what constitutes a healthy, functioning plurality. Biblical principle (e.g., Prov 15:22) and practical experience tell us that, generally speaking, a smaller eldership (two or three Elders) can be much more vulnerable to internal division and strife, which has significant adverse effects on the church.

²⁵ 1 Timothy 3:2 (cf. 1 Timothy 2:12-14), Titus 1:6

- The Council of Elders shall pursue an interview process of the man (and his wife, if married). The interview process shall include both a character and theological vetting to confirm his eligibility (see Elder Profile: Appendix V)
- Upon conclusion of the above interview process, the Council of Elders may – by *unanimous vote of the Elders* - propose a man to the Congregation to be considered for the office of Elder.
- After announcing the proposal of an Elder candidate, the Congregation will be invited to pray, consider, and offer feedback about the candidate within a period of no less than twenty-eight (28) days and not more than ninety (90) days. (This period of time may include a context for the Congregation to interact with the elder candidate about doctrinal, personal or practical ministry-related issues.)
- After hearing and considering the perspective of the Congregation, the Council of Elders may nominate the individual to the Congregation by *unanimous vote*
- Members must affirm the proposed elder by *a three-fourths* majority, as shown by a formal balloting process in a Members’ Meeting (per Section 3.04).

If such affirmation of the Congregation is received, at a mutually agreeable time, the Council of Elders shall publicly commission the new Elder through the laying on of hands and prayer. If such affirmation of the Congregation is *not* received, that man may *not* be nominated again for at least a twelve-month period.

The term of service for an Elder shall commence the month of his public commissioning, and with his public commissioning he shall be considered an ordained (i.e., publicly installed) and licensed minister of the gospel.

Section 4.04 Duties of Elders

The men serving as Elders are called to “shepherd” (or “pastor”) God’s church, which involves leading²⁶, teaching²⁷, and caring for²⁸ the church on the foundation of the Word, with prayer (see Elder Profile – Appendix V). In addition, Elders may officiate in the duties and functions in accord with their licensing: baptisms, funerals, and weddings for the members of Grace Church.

An Elder of Grace Church may officiate the wedding of a non-member with approval of the Council of Elders. However, an Elder of Grace Church may *only* officiate a wedding between one man and one woman. This is in accord with our beliefs and practices as stated in our *Confessional Statement* (Appendix I.)

Section 4.05 Lead Elder / Pastor

²⁶ 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 1 Timothy 5:17

²⁷ Ephesians 4:11ff., 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:2

²⁸ 1 Peter 5:1-5; James 5:13-15

The Council of Elders may appoint by *unanimous* vote a Lead Elder / Pastor (assuming previous affirmation by the Congregation to serve as an Elder, Section 4.03) who shall provide leadership, under the oversight of the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders may remove a man as Lead Pastor by a *three-fourths* vote (not inclusive of the Lead Pastor).

A Lead Elder shall be one of the Elders, but tasked with *initiative* in proposing direction for the church and with oversight of the *implementation* of the church's direction as determined by the Council of Elders. He shall also provide leadership to other Staff Elders.

Section 4.06 Use of an Interim Leadership Team

If fewer than five (5) Elders are commissioned at any given time, an Interim Leadership Team shall be established to carry out the leadership role of the Council of Elders until at least five (5) Elders are commissioned to serve on the Council of Elders. The total number of Elders and Interim Leadership Team members shall be no less than five (5).

Interim Leadership Team members (who are not Elders) are to be considered as assisting the Elders in the Elders' shepherding task. Thus, each member of the Interim Leadership Team will vote equally with the Elders on all matters of corporate governance.

Interim Leadership Team members (who are not Elders) shall be male since they are being called upon to help fulfill the leadership role of the Council of Elders²⁹. They must be members in good standing and deemed to meet the requirements in Scripture for a deacon (1 Tim 3.8-13). They shall be nominated by the Congregation, *unanimously* approved by the current Elders, and affirmed by a *majority* vote of the Gathered Congregation.

The term of service for individual Interim Leadership Team Members shall be determined by the Council of Elders. When five (5) or more Elders are commissioned to serve on the "Council of Elders", the Interim Leadership Team will be disbanded.

Section 4.07 Advisory Roles and Committees

The Elders may create advisory roles or committees (on a standing or ad hoc basis), and the members of any advisory committee can be both male and female.³⁰ Precisely how the Elders pursue such advice is left to the discretion of those Elders. The authority of any advisory committee shall be submitted to the overseeing authority of the Council of Elders.

²⁹ This is in accordance with 1 Tim 2.12-14 ("*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.*"), and in recognition of the authority/leadership role in corporate affairs that Interim Leadership Team members will have.

³⁰ This is in accordance with Gen 1.27 ("*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*"). We whole-heartedly affirm the absolute equality in value and dignity between men and women, being both created in the image and likeness of God. We value the wisdom and counsel of both male members and female members of this church.

Section 4.08 Other Roles and Committees

The Council of Elders may appoint specific jobs, tasks, or responsibilities to individual Elders. In addition, the Council of Elders may appoint two or more persons to serve as a special or standing committee, as the Council of Elders deems necessary. The authority of any committee shall be submitted to the overseeing authority of the Council of Elders.

Section 4.09 Pastoral Positions on Staff

Within the financial guidelines of Sections 7.04, 7.05, and 7.06, the Council of Elders may hire pastoral staff. However, the above Elder selection process (Section 4.03) must be followed if the candidate is not already serving as an Elder in the church.

In some cases, the Council of Elders may choose to formally nominate a man from outside this church to serve as a Staff Elder (e.g., hiring a Lead Pastor from outside this church). However, he must receive a *three-fourths* vote of affirmation of the Congregation (in keeping with Section 4.03). In such a case, the candidate may be welcomed into Membership at the same time he is commissioned as a Staff Elder.

Section 4.10 Staff Elder Compensation

Staff Elders are ineligible to determine their own compensation and benefits. Instead, a committee of at least three (3) Non-Staff Elders (or “Interim Leadership Team” members, or “Finance Committee” members) will perform the following related duties:

- Review and approve the job descriptions of each Staff Elder
- Perform and / or review the annual performance review for each Staff Elder
- Set salaries and approve all benefits for all Staff Elders

Section 4.11 Elder Term of Service

Non-staff elders shall serve three-year (3-year) terms, commencing the month of their public commissioning. However, a Non-Staff Elder, may be removed from office prior to the end of his three-year term by a *three-fourths* vote of the Elders (Section 4.13).

As the three-year term ends for a Non-Staff Elder, by *unanimous* recommendation of the Council of Elders a Non-Staff Elder may be nominated to serve another three-year term. A vote of the *three-fourths* of the Gathered Congregation is needed for a Non-Staff Elder’s continued service. Should such congregational affirmation be received, that Elder’s commissioning shall be extended for another three-year term. There is no limit to the number of consecutive terms a Non-Staff Elder may serve.

A Non-Staff Elder may request a sabbatical rest prior to being commissioned for another three-year term.

Staff Elders shall serve an indefinite term of office once commissioned so long as they remain on staff. Staff Elders have additional accountability to the Council of Elders through annual performance reviews. Staff Elders may be hired by *unanimous vote* of the Council of Elders and fired by a *three-fourths vote* of the Council of Elders (not inclusive of that particular Elder). Sabbaticals for Staff Elders may be approved by the Council of Elders.

If a Staff Elder intends, of his own volition, to transition to serving as a Non-Staff Elder, the Council of Elders may extend his commission as an Elder by up to twelve (12) months before he is nominated to serve a three-year term as a Non-Staff Elder.

An Elder may resign from office at any time by submitting a written letter of resignation to the Council of Elders. Upon formal acceptance, the resignation will be considered effective immediately, or at a mutually agreeable date.

Section 4.12 Charges Against an Elder

Recognizing their ultimate accountability to the Lord Jesus Christ,³¹ each Elder shall be accountable to the Council of Elders and to the Congregation for his life, teaching, and service to the church. In the event that a charge of moral or doctrinal failure is raised against an Elder³², the Council of Elders will assume responsibility to investigate all allegations pertaining to church-related matters (i.e., not criminal matters).

If the charges appear credible,³³ and involve moral impropriety, doctrinal error, or any charge that is harmful to the witness of the Gospel and the church, the Council of Elders shall take the following steps:

- The Council of Elders shall form a Task Force of at least three (3) individuals who may be Elders and/or other Members to further investigate the charge(s).
- During the investigation, the Elder in question shall not be allowed to vote as an Elder and he shall be placed on temporary leave (with pay in cases of Staff Elders).
- The Task Force shall bring the results of its investigation to the Council of Elders in a timely fashion (i.e., within thirty (30) days unless otherwise agreed upon) who, after providing the accused Elder with an opportunity to speak for himself, shall make a determination of the guilt or innocence of the accused Elder according to the criteria of Scripture, without showing partiality.³⁴
- A *three-fourths vote* of the Council of Elders (not inclusive of the Elder being charged) shall be necessary in order to find an Elder guilty of charges.

³¹ Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:4; cf. 1 Timothy 5:19-21.

³² A distinction is being made in this document between a “charge” and a “grievance”. A charge is more serious in nature as an accusation of some moral or doctrinal failing, one which would likely disqualify that individual from continued service as an Elder. A grievance will likely be akin to an unresolved conflict or unheeded concern of some significance.

³³ 1 Timothy 5:19

³⁴ James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:19-21

- If the accused Elder is found guilty of the charges brought against him, the consequences for such a finding shall be determined by the Council of Elders. Any action, up to and including immediate removal from office, shall require a *three-fourths* vote of the Elders. If the guilty Elder is removed from office, the Council of Elders shall publicly rebuke him before the Gathered Congregation.³⁵
- If the accused Elder is found not guilty of the charges brought or the matter is inconclusive (with no more than one dissenting vote), the Elder's temporary leave shall end and he shall be fully restored to ministry, including his voting rights as an elder. The Council of Elders shall determine what communication, if any, needs to be made to the Congregation.
- If two (2) or more Elders find the accused Elder guilty of charges that would warrant removal from office, but fewer than three fourths of the Elders find him guilty, a committee of at least six (6) mutually-agreed upon members of Grace Church (who are not Elders, Leadership Team members, or Task Force members) and / or mutually agreed upon Elders from a like-minded church, shall be formed to weigh the charges. This committee shall be informed of the charges and the necessary details. After providing an opportunity for the accused Elder to speak for himself, the committee shall vote on whether the leader shall be removed from office. With a *two-thirds vote* of the committee, the accused Elder shall be found guilty, and he shall be immediately removed from his office.

Section 4.13 Removing an Elder for Non-Disciplinary Reasons

An Elder's service may be terminated by dismissal for non-disciplinary reasons (e.g. no longer being able to carry out his responsibilities, or a change in church needs) by a *three-fourths vote* of the Council of Elders (not inclusive of that particular Elder), effective immediately or at a mutually agreeable time.

In the event that the dismissed Elder feels that the vote for dismissal was unwarranted, he may appeal for mediation from a panel of at least three (3) Members and / or Elders from like-minded churches. Panel members shall be selected by the Council of Elders, with the goal of finding participants whose impartiality is beyond dispute.

The panel shall hear the perspective of said Elder and of the Council of Elders, and then present their evaluation to the council of Elders. In the event that the Council of Elders still agrees (*by a three-fourths vote*) that it is best for the Elder to be dismissed, the decision shall stand and a written report of the mediation process shall be given to the Congregation by a representative of those involved in the mediation process. Those involved shall make every reasonable effort to complete the appeal process within forty-five (45) days.

Section 4.14 Meetings of the Council of Elders

³⁵ I Timothy 5:20

Generally, the Council of Elders shall meet once or twice per month at a scheduled time to conduct business; as they deem necessary. The Elders may have additional meetings.

Section 4.15 Quorum and Passing Vote in the Council of Elders

A quorum is defined as a majority of the Elders. A quorum is required for all voting matters.

Unless otherwise determined in this Book of Church Order, other written policies, or by other agreements, a passing vote shall require a simple *majority* of votes cast in order to make a decision within the Council of Elders.

In order to make a decision requiring a two-thirds majority, three-fourths majority, or unanimity in the Council of Elders, the decision will require the presence or consent to vote of all Elders. In all matters directly pertaining to an Elder's role, such as nomination for his next term of office, or decisions pertaining to an accusation against him, that Elder shall be recused from voting.

ARTICLE V.

Deacons and Other Leaders

Section 5.01 Purpose of Deacons

Deacons, under the oversight of the Council of Elders, shall administrate service—whether in financial matters, ministries of mercy, or other areas of service in church life. Deacons do not have any special governing authority in the church, and are submitted to the oversight of the Council of Elders.

There is no minimum or maximum number of Deacons to be commissioned. The number of Deacons and the job description of each Deacon may be determined by the Council of Elders in consideration of the gifts and needs of the congregation.

Section 5.02 Qualifications of Deacons

A Deacon must be a Member in good standing (including faith in Jesus Christ, subscription to the *Confessional Statement*, and the other expectations noted in Section 3.02) whose life consistently conforms to the qualifications for deacons presented in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Section 5.03 Selection & Confirmation of Deacons

When the Council of Elders believes that God is calling a Member to serve as a Deacon in the near-term future, the Deacon candidate shall be formally nominated by a *three-fourths* vote of the Council of Elders. A *majority* vote of affirmation of the Gathered Congregation shall be required for a nominated Deacon candidate.

After receiving affirmation of the congregation, the Council of Elders will commission a new Deacon publicly through the laying on of hands and prayer. The term of service for a Deacon shall commence the month of commissioning.

Section 5.04 Tenure of Deacons

Unless another period of service is determined by the Council of Elders and noted prior to affirmation of a Deacon candidate, Deacons shall serve three-year terms (commencing the month of public commissioning). There is no limit on the number of consecutive terms a Deacon may serve.

As the three-year term ends, by the recommendation of the Council of Elders, a Deacon serving faithfully and fruitfully may be nominated to serve another three-year term. A majority affirmation of the Gathered Congregation is needed to affirm a Deacon's continued service. With the recommendation of the Council of Elders and affirmation of the Congregation, the Deacon's commissioning shall be extended for another three-year term.

Section 5.05 Other Ministry Leaders or Staff Members

Though all church Members are to do “the work of ministry”³⁶, the Council of Elders may choose to appoint or recognize ministry leaders for a variety of ministry purposes, and may (with due process) choose to hire some persons for internships or long-term staff positions.

Unless otherwise specified, the qualifications for other ministry leaders and staff members shall be consistent with the qualifications noted for Deacons in Section 5.02. On a case-by-case basis, the Council of Elders may choose to license or ordain commissioned leaders (other than Elders) for ministry.

Section 5.06 Resignation or Removal of Deacons, Ministry Leaders, or Staff Members

A Deacon, ministry leader, or staff member may resign from his or her role by submitting a letter of resignation to the Council of Elders. Upon formal acceptance, the resignation will be considered effective immediately, or at a mutually agreeable date.

The Council of Elders may also decide (through due process) to remove a Deacon, ministry leader, or staff member from his or her position. If a Member feels he or she has been removed without just cause, he or she may seek resolution, in keeping with Article IX.

³⁶ Ephesians 4:12

ARTICLE VI.

Discipline of Members

Section 6.01 Purpose of Discipline

Scripture describes and directs a process of the church disciplining unrepentant members.³⁷ The primary aim of church discipline is the spiritual restoration of a brother or sister in Christ.³⁸ (See Appendix III for the *Statement on Church Discipline*.) Church discipline aims to demonstrate:

- Love for the individual, that he or she might be warned and with the aim that he or she would be brought to repentance and restoration (Matt 18:10-17);
- Love for the church, that the purity, health, and strength of the flock might be protected, since “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Gal 5:9);
- Love for the watching world, that it might see Christ’s transforming power, and that our witness would not be hindered, tarnished, or discredited;
- Love for Christ, that His church might uphold his holy name and obey him and so glorify Him.

Section 6.02 Process of Discipline

In cases of church discipline, the process carried out in a spirit of love (per above) will be:

- A private appeal will be made to the sinning member by one or more Members (this may be a lengthy series of private appeals, depending on the situation).
- If the Member appears unrepentant, the Council of Elders will assume jurisdiction to investigate the charges fairly and impartially – involving other Members as wisdom and prudence dictate, reflecting the widening circles described in Matthew 18:15-17.
- If the process of appeal above has been pursued and the Member continues to be unrepentant, the Elders will inform the Gathered Congregation (in a Members’ Meeting) of necessary details to inform them, and ask them to pray for and appeal to the unrepentant Member (per Matthew 18:17).
- After due investigation, and after due appeals for repentance, if the individual is continuing in unrepentant sin, the Council of Elders will terminate the individual’s membership.

In rare cases of flagrant unrepentant sin (e.g. sins that do obvious harm to Christ’s reputation, sins that may cause harm to other members, or divisive false teachings), the Council of Elders may significantly accelerate the above process.

³⁷ Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:6-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

³⁸ Galatians 6:1; 2 Corinthians 2:6-11

It is hoped that the above steps would result in repentance on the part of the sinning Member, and full restoration of their membership in Grace Church. However, if repentance is not displayed after these steps are taken, the individual's membership shall be terminated. Such termination of membership shall be decided by the Council of Elders after due consideration and prayer. The reason for termination of membership shall be stated in a pastoral letter delivered to the disciplined person. The Gathered Congregation will also be informed of the conclusion of the discipline process and any necessary details.

Section 6.03 Grievances over Discipline

Should a disciplined member believe that such a process was carried out unjustly, he or she may follow the *Grievance Resolution & Conflict Reconciliation Process* (see Article IX) to have a hearing of their grievances.

ARTICLE VII.

Church Financial Stewardship

Section 7.01 Church Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Church shall be from September 1 through August 31.

Section 7.02 Financial Steward

To promote financial integrity, the Council of Elders shall by unanimous vote appoint a Financial Steward, who may be a Deacon, Elder, or other Member in good standing of Grace Church with appropriate skills in the area of finance.

Section 7.03 Duties of the Financial Steward

To guard the financial integrity of the church--since “we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord’s sight, but also in the sight of man” (2 Cor 8:20-21)--the Financial Steward shall be responsible to:

- Oversee the process of formulating an annual budget, in concert with the Council of Elders and other pertinent Members.
- Oversee the keeping of accurate records of all financial transactions and all offerings received (including giving records of individual contributors);
- Oversee the maintenance of adequate insurance coverage for church property;
- Oversee the formulation and enforcement of policies governing the use and care of church property (except equipment supervised by other church ministries);
- Inform the Council of Elders of the financial status of the church on not less than a quarterly basis;
- Oversee the creation and delivery of appropriate reports to the Congregation of the financial status of the church, at least bi-annually in Members’ Meetings.

The Financial Steward may lead a committee or team(s) of members to prudently manage some or all of the above responsibilities.

Section 7.04 Annual Budget

A budget process shall be overseen by the Financial Steward in preparation for each fiscal year, under the oversight of the Council of Elders, and in communication with pertinent Deacons or other church leaders.

The budget shall be sent to the Congregation at least fourteen (14) days prior to a Members’ Meeting, both via email and in a Sunday service, with the intention of receiving affirmation or concerns from Members. This proposed budget may be lightly amended within this period in

response to feedback. If no substantive concerns are raised in the Members' Meeting, or if all substantive concerns are resolved, the budget will be considered to be affirmed.

If there are unresolved budget concerns deemed substantive by the Financial Steward or Council of Elders that arise from the Members' Meeting, the Council of Elders will convene to consider those concerns. They will then adjust the budget as needed, report back to the Members of the church, and invite further feedback. The church shall continue to operate within the limits of the last affirmed budget until a new budget in which all substantive concerns raised by the Congregation are resolved.

Section 7.05 Compensation

The Council of Elders shall decide matters of compensation for all paid staff who are not Elders. This shall be done in conjunction with the Leadership Team or a Finance Committee (if currently commissioned). Staff Elders shall be recused from decisions regarding compensation for Staff Elders (see Section 4.10 above).

Section 7.06 Non-budgeted Financial Decisions

To spend more than 110% of the total funds previously affirmed in the fiscal year's budget (including major property decisions, or any decisions that would lead the church to take on new or additional financial debt for more than sixty [60] days), the Council of Elders must provide a written proposal for the budget increase at least fourteen (14) days in advance of a vote of a Members Meeting. This written proposal may be lightly amended within the fourteen (14) day period in response to feedback. Approval of the above changes to the budget shall require a *majority* affirmation of the Gathered Congregation. Without such affirmation, the church shall operate within the limits of the last affirmed budget.

Section 7.07 Indemnification

Subject to the provisions regarding prohibited indemnification below, the church shall indemnify any Elder or former Elder of the church against claims, liabilities, expenses, and costs necessarily incurred by him in connection with the defense, compromise, or settlement of any action, suit or proceeding, civil or criminal, in which such person is made a party by reason of being or having been an Elder, to the extent not otherwise compensated, indemnified or reimbursed by insurance, if:

1. The conduct of the Elder was in good faith;
2. The Elder reasonably believed that his conduct was in the best interests of the church, or at least not opposed to its best interests; and
3. In the case of any criminal proceeding, the Elder had no reasonable cause to believe that his conduct was unlawful

ARTICLE VIII.

Formal Affiliations

Section 8.01 Allowance for Formal Affiliations

Grace Church of East County may enter into a formal affiliation(s) with another church, group of churches, or any other organizing body.

A "formal affiliation" shall be any agreement that formally identifies this church with another Bible-believing, Gospel-preaching church, group of churches, or organizing body through an ongoing monetary commitment, time commitment, or other formally agreed upon commitment.

Such an affiliation must be deemed to serve the vision and mission of this church, as led by its elders, and the greater purposes of God in the gospel of His Son.

By way of distinction, a relational partnership in the gospel - like currently enjoyed with Grace Church-North County - shall not be considered a "formal affiliation" since it places no specific commitments upon this local church or its leadership.

Section 8.02 Entering Into or Ending a Formal Affiliation

For Grace Church to enter into any formal affiliation (as described above), the Council of Elders must *unanimously* vote to approve. In addition, a *majority* vote of the Gathered Congregation is also necessary to enter into such an affiliation.

To end a formal affiliation with another church, a group of churches, or any other organizing body, requires at least a *four-fifths* vote of the Council of Elders. Ending a formal affiliation also requires a *majority* vote of the Gathered Congregation.

ARTICLE IX.

Resolving Grievances and Reconciling Conflicts

Section 9.01 Resolving Grievances and Conflicts in the Church

The Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church.³⁹ Members shall therefore be asked to make every effort to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblical principles, without reliance on the secular courts. This approach to resolving disputes does not prohibit the involvement of secular authorities with regard to criminal activity or matters that jeopardize the safety of any persons.

In addition, the Elders desire to bring leadership to the church that is open to observations and disagreement. Members of this church should be made to feel at ease and appreciated when they bring a concern to an Elder or leader.

Section 9.02 Addressing Unresolved Grievances and Conflicts

Despite our commitment to Biblical peacemaking (Section 9.01), there may be instances of unresolved grievance or unreconciled conflict involving Members of this church, an Elder, or several Elders. In those instances, the Council of Elders and Members shall follow the process outlined below.

This *Grievance Resolution & Conflict Reconciliation Process* is to be used when a complaint “cannot be resolved through informal measures, and the matter is too serious to overlook.”⁴⁰ As noted above, this process shall begin with attempts for personal reconciliation and mediation within this church, but shall also allow in due course for appeals to Christian mediation from outside this church.

This process is to be distinguished from the process of bringing a charge against an Elder (Section 4.12). A charge against an Elder shall be considered a more serious matter of moral or doctrinal failure, which may disqualify that person from serving as an Elder.

Section 9.03 Goals for Grievance Resolution & Conflict Reconciliation

We have derived this process from God’s Word, and from the work of Toby Kurth (Christ Church of Presidio Park) and Peacemaker Ministries. It has the following primary goals:

³⁹ Matthew 18:15–20, 1 Corinthians 6:1–8

⁴⁰ Ken Sande, “*Approachability: The Passport to Real Ministry and Leadership*”, Peacemaker Ministries.

- **Process satisfaction:** a clear and fair process where everyone involved agrees that they had a reasonable opportunity to present their side of the matter (1 Cor. 14:40)
- **Personal satisfaction:** treating everyone respectfully and equally, just as you would want to be treated (Matt. 7:12, James 2:1-4)
- **Outcome satisfaction:** an outcome that is as just and equitable as is humanly possible (Micah 6:8; Prov. 28:5)⁴¹

Section 9.04 Principles for Grievance Resolution & Conflict Reconciliation

The Elders of Grace Church and any party bringing a grievance or involved in a conflict will seek to be submitted to the authority of Scripture and carry out the proceedings in accordance with the following Biblical principles⁴²:

- “Do to others what you would have them to do you”** (Matt. 7:12). Parties must continually ask, “If I had brought this complaint, or if I was the person accused of wrongdoing, how would I want the investigators to proceed at this particular step?”
- Give a hearing with objectivity and impartiality** (Lev. 19:15). The Council of Elders will, in accordance with our governance, typically hear and assess any grievances. If either party doubts their objectivity in this matter, a team of members in good standing will be appointed by the Council of Elders. If a team member is not acceptable to either accuser or accused, every reasonable effort will be made to replace that team member with a more acceptable person. When faced with particularly complex issues, it may be wise to involve a trained conciliator who can offer advice to all those involved in the situation and help them follow a process that promotes understanding and reconciliation (Prov. 13:10).
- Insist on firsthand information.** Do not accept hearsay, anonymous or secondhand reports (Deut. 19:15; 1 Tim. 5:19). Do not depend on one person’s interpretation of the other person’s conduct or motives. Go to original sources and hear the relevant information with your own ears.
- Avoid surprises.** Give people ample notice of planned meetings and discussions so that they have time to adjust their schedules and prepare what they want to say.
- Give people the opportunity to hear testimony against him or her and to make a prepared defense** (Deut. 19:16). In some cases it may be appropriate for investigators to gather preliminary information and talk with witnesses on their own, but the parties involved in

⁴¹ Ken Sande, “*Approachability: The Passport to Real Ministry and Leadership*”, Peacemaker Ministries.

⁴² Ibid.

the dispute should have the opportunity to hear and respond to any adverse witness or evidence that may be considered by those who will render a final decision in the matter.

- F. **Take time to prayerfully seek consensus.** When an investigative or leadership team reaches a decision by a slight majority, it may result in a backlash from people in the church who feel that the team did not diligently seek God's will in the matter. Therefore, unless extenuating circumstances necessitate an immediate decision by a simple majority, it is wise to take time to thoroughly investigate a complaint and prayerfully arrive at a decision that the entire team can reasonably support, especially if others are likely to criticize their judgment.
- G. **Fully explain the reasons behind your final decision.** Avoid every appearance of a cover-up and leave no room for doubt as to why you decided as you did. List the central facts and guiding biblical principles and explain your conclusions clearly and specifically.
- H. **If someone has done something wrong, encourage him or her to confess it, take responsibility for his actions, and make needed changes** (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9). At each step in the process, individuals are encouraged to acknowledge their own sin (Matthew 7:1-5) and be reconciled. In cases of serious sin or violations of trust involving a leader, that leader may be required to resign his office. But when he clearly demonstrates a repentant and teachable spirit and the offense does not automatically disqualify him for office, he should be reassured of God's grace and forgiveness, and given an opportunity to show how God is helping him to change. Similarly, if it is discovered that someone brought the complaint without valid grounds, the accuser should be encouraged to repent and change.
- I. **Provide a way to appeal any unresolved issues.** When a dispute in a local church cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties, Scripture indicates that the church should provide some kind of appeal process that allows the parties to appeal the matter to a persons who are not involved and whose objectivity is beyond question (see Exod. 18:19-26; Deut. 1:17; Acts 15:1-31).

Section 9.05 Process for Grievance Resolution & Conflict Reconciliation

Step 1: Receiving the Complaint. When a complaint (as defined in Section 9.02) is brought verbally or in written form to any Elder or leader of Grace Church (assuming Section 9.01 has been reasonably pursued), the Elders will schedule a meeting at the earliest possible opportunity to hear the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within at least four (4) weeks of receiving the complaint, unless a different time frame is mutually agreed upon. The Elders will provide a copy of this resolution process to the individual bringing the complaint and request that the complaint be provided in written form if possible.

Step 2: Hearing the Complaint. A minimum of three (3) Elders will be present at the meeting and meeting minutes will be kept. The individual bringing the complaint can bring up to two (2) people to the meeting to either provide personal support or corroborate the complaint. The individual bringing the complaint will be provided with ample, uninterrupted time to explain his or her concern(s). The Elders will then have the opportunity to ask the individual questions and seek to understand the complaint. A written form of the complaint will be presented to the individual bringing the complaint at the end of the meeting and the individual bringing the complaint will have the opportunity to affirm that it accurately represents the concerns. The Elders and the individual will determine whether resolution is possible at that time or whether further investigation and consideration is required. If one party has done something wrong, he will be encouraged to confess it, take responsibility for his actions, and make needed changes.

Step 3: Investigation. If the individual bringing the complaint or the Elders believe further investigation is required then the Elders will investigate the matter further or they will appoint an investigative team whose objectivity and impartiality is beyond question. The investigation will be conducted in accordance with the principles detailed above. The investigative team will keep all findings confidential and will produce a report which will be provided to the elders and the individual bringing the complaint. The team's work will be completed within thirty (30) days of the original meeting if possible. If the investigative team cannot finish its report within thirty (30) days, the individual bringing the complaint will be notified of the cause of the delay. The investigative team will seek to present its findings without bias.

Step 4: Consideration. The Elders will meet to discuss the report and come to a consensus on their response to the findings. If one party has done something wrong, they will encourage him to confess it, take responsibility for his actions, and make needed changes. The Elders will produce a written document that details their consensus and grounds their decision as much as possible in Scripture. A prescribed response will be included in the document so progress can be reviewed at a later date as determined by the Elders.

Step 5: Responding to the Complaint. A minimum of three (3) Elders will be present at the meeting and meeting minutes will be kept. The individual bringing the complaint can bring up to two (2) people to the meeting to provide personal support. The Elders will present their consensus to the individual bringing the complaint. Any parties that need to ask forgiveness of another party will be encouraged to do so.

Step 6: Appealing. If either the individual bringing the complaint or those found to be at fault are not in agreement with the findings of the Elders, the decision can be appealed to an additional review board (which the Elders will then appoint, and participants will be mutually agreed upon as much as possible). Members of the additional review board must not be involved in the matter and their objectivity must be beyond question in accordance with Principle I above. This additional review board will review the matter and produce their findings in writing within thirty (30) days of the appeal.

Step 7: Resolution of Appeal. The additional review board will review all meeting minutes, the report of the investigative team, if there is one, the written complaint, and any other documents related to the matter. The additional review board may wish to conduct additional interviews of its own or to speak with the individual that appealed the original decision. If any such interviews are conducted then a transcript or minutes of the interview will be provided for the file. The additional review board will send its findings to the Elders of Grace Church along with instructions for how they recommend resolving the appeal. The Elders will meet to discuss the appeal and come to consensus. If the Elders are in agreement with the additional review board, they will schedule a meeting within fourteen (14) days of receiving the findings with the individual that brought the complaint and any individuals with unresolved issues related to the complaint to seek final resolution. The individual bringing the complaint can bring up to two (2) people to the meeting for personal support.

If the Elders do not agree with the findings of the additional review board they must reply to the board within fourteen (14) days detailing clear and Biblical reasons why they do not agree. If the Elders and the additional review board are not in agreement then the Elders will write a report detailing their consensus and provide it to the additional review board and the individual bringing the complaint. The Elders will do everything possible to seek resolution, unity, and peace.

The goal of this process is to consistently practice these principles in order to resolve as many complaints as possible in a redemptive manner. “In the process, people can be encouraged to express their concerns productively. Leaders (and Members) can be protected from false accusations and encouraged to grow where needed. The reputation of the church or ministry can be preserved. And most importantly, God's name will be honored as his people respond to one another as Christ would, with justice, integrity, and righteousness.”⁴³

⁴³ Ken Sande, “*Approachability: The Passport to Real Ministry and Leadership*”, Peacemaker Ministries.

ARTICLE X.

Amendments and Adjustments to Bylaws or BCO

Section 10.01 Process for Amending Bylaws or BCO

The Bylaws and the BCO shall be modified, amended and/or supplemented as follows:

1. By a *unanimous* vote of the Council of Elders ; and,
2. By a *majority* vote of the Gathered Congregation, with only one exception: a change of the address of the church's primary office or mailing address in Section 2.02 may be made by decision of the Council of Elders without requiring a vote of the Congregation.

Section 10.02 Governing Documents – Conflicts

In the event of any conflict between provisions of the Bylaws and the BCO, the provisions of the BCO shall govern and apply in the place and stead of any conflicting provisions in the Bylaws.

APPENDIX I.

Confessional Statement

This *Confessional Statement* is an adaptation of the Confessional Statement of “The Gospel Coalition”¹. However we are wedded to the truths of Scripture, as summarized below, and not to the doctrinal stance of any particular ministry.

- 1. The Triune God.** We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.
- 2. Revelation.** God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God’s truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God’s revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God’s instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God’s command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God’s pledge, in all that it promises. As God’s people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.
- 3. Creation of Humanity.** We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God’s agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that

¹ This statement may be downloaded at: <http://thegospelcoalition.org/about/who>

marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

4. **The Fall.** We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God's own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.
5. **The Plan of God.** We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.
6. **The Gospel.** We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God's very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is Christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is: "Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised"). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).
7. **The Redemption of Christ.** We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He

perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

8. **The Justification of Sinners.** We believe that Christ, by his obedience, death and bodily resurrection, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. By his bodily resurrection, he triumphantly showed himself to be the true basis of our justification, for all who believe. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.
9. **The Power of the Holy Spirit.** We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the other *Paraclete*, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, and in him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.
10. **The Kingdom of God.** We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the

kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

11. God's New People. We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

12. The Nature of Marriage and Sexuality. We believe the term "marriage" has only one meaning, and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that we are all sinners and all prone to sexual sin. However, we also believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God. We believe that God offers redemption and full reconciliation to him for all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and

dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrines of the church. *Gen. 2:24; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-32; 1 Cor. 5:1-2; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23; Mark 10:6-9*

13. **Baptism and the Lord's Supper.** We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.

14. **The Restoration of All Things.** We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

APPENDIX II.

Membership Agreement

As a member of Grace Church, I profess that I have believed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, the gift of eternal life, and the gift of the Holy Spirit who empowers us to believe and to live for the glory of God.

Based on our common ground of Jesus and his finished work, I gladly agree to walk together with the members of this church by making the following commitments:

- I am in agreement with the church's "Confessional Statement", and will uphold its major tenets as the fundamental basis of our unity as a church.
- I will seek to live together with my brothers and sisters in love as God has loved us and I will, as God enables me, care for my brothers and sisters in Christ in distress, sickness, and poverty.
- I will pursue conciliation when offense occurs between myself and another member, and I will reject all opportunities to speak or to hear gossip or slander.
- I will watch out for church members and admonish anyone whose practice of sin requires it. If one of our number requires corporate discipline, I will support the efforts and direction of the church to call that member to repent of his sins. I agree with the church's doctrine and practice of church discipline as described in the church's "Statement on Church Discipline".
- I will promote marriage as a reflection of Christ's relationship with his church and bring up any children God gives me in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. I support the church's understanding of the Bible's teaching on divorce and remarriage as described in the church's "Statement on Divorce and Remarriage".
- I will not neglect to meet together regularly for corporate worship with this body in its Sunday services.
- I will (if not already baptized) pursue being baptized in water, to obey Jesus' command and to identify publicly with Jesus, at the next available opportunity that this church provides.
- I will willingly receive spiritual care from the elders of this church, and will seek to affirm the overall leadership of the elders.

APPENDIX III.

Statement on Church Discipline

Throughout its pages, the Bible sounds a recurring theme: those God loves, he disciplines.¹ That is, he teaches and trains us for our good as he transforms us from within. This is the nature of all biblical, redemptive “discipline”.

Such teaching and training, in the form of God’s discipline, is a sometimes challenging process as God corrects his people’s thoughts, words and behavior so they can fulfill their calling of becoming more and more like him. God disciplines his people through a variety of means. He calls his people first to self-discipline. Each Christian is called to hear the Word of God as he reads the Bible and hears the Bible taught and applied.² As he compares his life to God’s Word, he adjusts himself to conform to his Savior by the power of the Holy Spirit.

However, individual interaction with God and his Word is not the only means that God uses to make his children holy; God also intends to use his people. “Brothers,” writes Paul, “if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness....”³ As members of this local church, we wish to take seriously our responsibility to “restore” members who fail to respond to God’s personal discipline. This means that beginning with private confrontation and, if necessary, leading to public rebuke, we seek to help one another overcome any refusal to repent of those words and actions that the Bible clearly defines as sin.⁴ This would apply to areas of sin that could bring harm to oneself or others, as well as reproach to the Lord. It could also include a refusal to turn from heretical doctrine.

Jesus outlined a process for redemptively addressing another believer’s sin in Matthew 18:15-17.⁵ As a church, we agree that this is the appropriate way to approach someone who refuses to appropriate God’s grace for change. Initially, such a process should be informal: if a Christian sees a brother or sister sinning in a way that appears to be continual or habitual, he should approach that person personally and inquire about it. If in fact there is unrepentant sin and a refusal to repent, then the concerned brother or sister should involve one or two others, which may include an elder. If this larger group confirms that sin continues without repentance, the process may move to more formal church discipline as the circle of those involved is appropriately expanded. The goal in doing so is always that we might have “gained (our) brother (or sister)” (Matthew 18:15).

When the church begins to formally discipline a member, the church’s elders inquire with the individual member in question to confirm fact and to appeal for change. If change is not forthcoming, the elders will inform the church of the member and his sin, urging members to contact the erring member and appeal for repentance. During this time, the member under discipline may not participate in the Lord’s Supper. In addition, his participation with members should revolve around his need for change. If, after a reasonable period of appeal,

no repentance if forthcoming, the elders will inform the church again, this time announcing that they must revoke membership and that the church must now treat the unrepentant person as they treat unbelievers: in other words, when they interact with this person they should not have “fellowship” as the Bible defines it, but they should appeal for the former member to put his faith in Jesus’ work in the good news of his life, death, and resurrection for their sins.

Church discipline has nothing to do with “shunning” a person. It involves confronting sin in love and with gentleness. Where more formal discipline is needed, this does not comprise the rejection of a relationship but a change in the nature of that relationship. If a person under discipline is not factious or disruptive or a harmful influence, he is welcomed to attend all church meetings that are open to unbelievers. The elders may decide to abbreviate or eliminate the process of appeal for repentance if the sin is especially notorious, or if the member proves to be factious, disruptive, or leading others into sin or error. In these cases, the elders may ask church members to avoid all contact with an individual in order to mitigate his sinful influence.

At times a member may seek to withdraw from the church to avoid church discipline and its consequences. Just as a good shepherd will go after a sheep that has wandered from the flock (Matthew 18:12-14; Ezekiel 34:4,8,16), so shall the elders and members of this church seek to restore a wandering member to the Lord. Therefore, discipline may be instituted or continued either before or after a member seeks to withdraw from membership if the elders determine that such discipline may serve to guard and preserve the honor of God, protect the purity of the church, or restore the wandering member to the Lord. While the church cannot force a withdrawing member to remain in this congregation, the church has the right and the responsibility to encourage restoration, to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, and to make a final determination as to the person’s membership status at the time withdrawal is sought or acknowledged.

If a member leaves the church while he is under the scrutiny of the disciplinary process or while a censure against him is still in effect, and if the elders learn that he is attending another church, they may inform that church’s leadership that the person is currently under church discipline and may ask that church to encourage the accused to repent of his sin and to be restored to the Lord and to any people whom he has offended. Such communications enhance the possibility that a person may finally repent of his sin, and, at the same time, serve to warn the other church to be on guard against possible harm that the accused might do (see Matthew 18:12-14; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:16-18; 4:9, 14-15; 3 John 9-10).

Once the elders make a sin publicly known, they also commit to inform the church of repentance and restoration to fellowship as appropriate to the situation and the good of the church. Again, this is our desire and motive for any disciplinary process. We want and believe the grace of God in Jesus is more than sufficient to restore any person who truly repents of his or her sin.

Christians who attend our church and have been excluded from fellowship from another church will not be allowed to participate in fellowship here unless they repent of their sins and make confession and restitution with their former church or the elders of this church are able to determine that the former church did not apply church discipline according to Scripture.

1. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (Hebrews 12:5-6 ESV, see also verses 7-13).
2. See John 15:3, 10, 20; John 17:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:11-13.
3. Galatians 6:1 ESV
4. Other New Testament passages (besides Galatians 6:1 and Matthew 18:15-17) that support this practice include: 1 Corinthians 5; Acts: 20:28ff; Galatians 2:11-14; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 3:10-11; Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.
5. If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (ESV).

APPENDIX IV.

Statement on Divorce and Remarriage

Our earnest desire as a church is to glorify God by obeying his command that “marriage be held in honor among all.”¹ Thus we will strive together such that every marriage is an ever-increasingly clear reflection of the relationship between Christ and the church. We believe that, by God’s grace, every married couple in this church should seek to reflect in increasing measure Jesus’ sacrificial love for his bride, and the church’s responsive love to him.²

Nevertheless, divorce is a sad reality in our society and in the church at large. While God has, from the beginning, intended that marriage be lifelong³ and glorify God by reflecting the relationship of Christ to his church,⁴ there are times when our Lord permits a believer to seek a divorce without sinning against God or a spouse. The conditions under which this may happen are only two:

- when a spouse commits sins that involve sexual contact with another person;⁵
- when an unbelieving spouse abandons a marriage.⁶

It is important to note that God permits divorce in such cases. Divorce is not required, nor will the church encourage a spouse to divorce when he or she has faith toward God for the marriage to be restored—even when the situations listed above exist.

For the church to condone a divorce in these cases, the spouse must submit the facts of his or her marital situation to the elders to determine before God in Scripture what he would permit. If a spouse who is a member of the church seeks a divorce from another member due to abandonment, he or she must first wait for the church to follow its practice of church discipline to the end of treating the sinning spouse as an unbeliever before divorce may become a biblically allowable option. However, the elders of the church may, in some instances, need to render a decision as to the admissibility of grounds for a biblically-allowable divorce without a church discipline process being completed.⁷

Separated spouses awaiting a pending divorce should consider themselves married until the day a civil court declares the divorce final and legally recognized. They should thus conduct themselves in the church as a married person.

If a divorced person becomes a member of the church, he or she should understand that remarriage will only be condoned by the church when the circumstances prior to the divorce, or following after the divorce, fall under the two conditions listed above. If the circumstances of the divorce do not conform to what Scripture deems acceptable, the divorced person should consider before God whether he or she should seek reconciliation with his or her former spouse. He or she should also seek to confess to God and to his or her former spouse any sins committed in the seeking of a divorce that did not comply with the teaching of Scripture.

However, the situations in which people find themselves vary greatly, especially as it relates to divorce and remarriage. If you have questions about how the Bible speaks to your situation, please speak with an elder. We would be happy to discuss your situation and hope with you in the grace of God that can redeem any situation, no matter how painful or challenging.

Lastly, in applying the Bible to situations related to divorce it should also be noted that there are situations in which a spouse finds himself or herself in some physical danger as they relate to their spouse. We would urge an appropriate physical separation for the protection of a spouse in such a situation, and we would encourage the involvement of the civil authorities whenever or wherever appropriate for that situation. The goal of such a separation should be protection, with the ultimate goal of reconciliation at an appropriate time. However, such a separation for one's physical protection is not in violation of the biblical principles described above.

-
1. Hebrews 13:4
 2. Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7
 3. Matthew 19:4-5; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11
 4. Ephesians 5:22-33
 5. Matthew 5:31-32
 6. 1 Corinthians 7:12-16
 7. There would need to be a clear pattern of actions that are tantamount to desertion for the principle of abandonment that God gives in 1 Cor 7.15 to possibly come to bear.

APPENDIX V.

Elder Profile & Responsibilities

BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELDERS

A man must first meet the biblical qualifications for elders as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3 in order to qualify for elder nomination. A man meets the biblical qualifications for eldership when his life and character are substantially marked by growing maturity in the categories outlined in Scripture. After being appointed as an elder, a man continues to qualify as an elder as long as his life and character continue to be substantially marked by maturity in these Biblical qualifications for elders.

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. - **1 Timothy 3:1-7**

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. - **Titus 1:5-9**

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. - **1 Peter 5:1-3**

OTHER CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

We believe the unity of the church is served when the elders share fundamental agreement on our primary guiding principles. We also believe that the above biblical qualifications for elders should evidence themselves in observable ways. Therefore it is important that the following additional criteria be in place for someone nominated to eldership:

1. A man and his wife (if married) must be members in good standing of Grace Church.
2. A man must hold firmly, without qualification, to our "Confessional Statement".

3. A man must be able to gladly affirm as biblical our “Theological Distinctives”¹
4. A man must demonstrate active participation in fellowship with other believers in Grace Church (e.g., typically in a Grace Church small group).
5. A man must have an observable ability for and inclination to serve fruitfully in the spiritual care of others (i.e., an ability and inclination to “*shepherd the flock*” – 1 Pet 5.2).
6. A man must support the practice of leadership by a plurality of elders as delineated by our statement of “Polity Convictions & Commitments” (downloadable from our website).

DUTIES OF ELDERS: PRIMARY DUTIES

The primary responsibility of all of the elders of Grace Church is to “shepherd the flock of God that is among” us (1 Peter 5:2). We see these shepherding functions of an elder as being summarized under the following headings:

1. Shepherding Involves Knowing the Sheep. Just as the Good Shepherd knows His sheep and His sheep know Him, so under-shepherds (John 10:14-15) need to know their sheep and the sheep know their shepherds. We need to know both who constitutes the flock and the individual life circumstances, challenges, and health of each member of the flock. Membership identifies the entire Grace Church flock for whom we have “to give an account” (Heb. 13:17) and spheres and small groups further define an under-shepherds immediate responsibility. In order to know the individual members, a shepherd will typically oversee some Home Groups or lead one himself. If an elder identifies a sheep that is bruised, wounded, or straying he is now able to meet individually to know them more personally and care for them more effectively.

2. Shepherding Involves Feeding the Sheep. In order to keep the flock healthy and strong the elders need to feed the sheep. Just as the Father is committed to feeding the sheep (Ezekiel 34:14:15) and leading them to “green pastures” and “still waters” (Psalm 23:2), so His under shepherds need to feed the sheep. As under shepherds of God’s flock the elders are to feed the sheep with God’s word since “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). This requires the elders to know their Bibles and to effectively teach and apply God’s word in various settings and by various means. Feeding the sheep also requires the elders to equip the sheep on how to read their Bibles and to encourage the sheep to feed daily on God’s word.

3. Shepherding Involves Leading the Sheep. In order to keep the flock together and direct them towards “green pastures” (Psalm 23:2) the elders need to lead the sheep. Just as the Good Shepherd leads the sheep “beside quiet waters” and in “path of righteousness” (Psalm 23:2-3), so His under shepherds need to lead the sheep. Leadership begins with elders being “examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3) as each elder tends to his own walk with God, his pursuit of grace-motivated sanctification, his leading and loving his wife, his training and loving his children, and his active participation in our corporate life as a church. In addition to his example, an elder’s leadership role may include helping to cast vision, communicate direction, and provide counsel based on God’s Word. This means an elder needs to have at least a degree of leadership gift (Romans 12:8), thus being able to look ahead and

¹ These distinctives are taught in the Discovering Grace Church course, and include our being baptistic, reformed, and continuationist.

discern the future needs and ministries of the church. Finally, they must be men of courage, who fear God, and are willing to lead the church through difficult decisions and times by the Word of God.

4. Shepherding Involves Protecting the Sheep. In order to keep the flock from wandering off, attack from false teachers (Titus 1:7), or those who seek to divide the flock, the elders need to protect the sheep. Just as the Apostle Paul urged the Ephesian elders to protect the sheep (Acts 20:28-29), so Grace Church's elders need to protect the sheep. Protecting the sheep includes teaching sound doctrine, correcting false teaching, guarding against cultural influences that cause drift, disciplining those who are unrepentant, and correcting those who are divisive. While some of this protection will come through the regular teaching of God's Word on Sunday morning, a good measure of this shepherding will take place in the context of community. In order to effectively protect the flock an elder must be aware of the overall health of the sheep in his sphere of responsibility, both corporately and individually.

DUTIES OF ELDERS: OTHER SHARED DUTIES

The elders of Grace Church will, as an eldership, share in the responsibilities to lovingly govern the church, teach the Word of God and "shepherd the flock" as overseers (1 Peter 5:1-3). Specifically, these shared responsibilities of the eldership will include:

1. Giving themselves to diligent study and fervent prayer;
2. Consistently offering their lives as examples to the flock;
3. Developing contexts for both the equipping and the work of the saints in order to present them to God as mature in Christ;
4. Mobilizing the church to the world through mercy and evangelistic ministry;
5. Instructing and examining baptism and membership candidates;
6. Giving oversight to the corporate observance of the Lord's Supper;
7. Admonishing and/or disciplining members when needed;
8. Caring for the sick, elderly, hurting, non-participating, etc.;
9. Promoting prayer within the fellowship;
10. Clarifying and guarding church doctrine and/or practices, including the formulation of consequent church policies;
11. Participating regularly and actively in the service and ministry of the church;
12. Overseeing our small group ministry as a primary context for our shared fellowship.

ELDER MEETINGS

The elder will prioritize his attendance and participation on Sunday morning and all other Grace corporate events. In addition to these corporate settings, the elder will perform his duties in the context of regularly scheduled meetings and ad hoc meetings. For non-staff elders the normal pattern of regularly scheduled meetings includes the following.

1. Sunday Service – once per week
2. Elders' Meetings – one to two evenings per month

3. Elder Care Meetings & Retreat – typically one evening per year as a couple (if married) and one annual couples’ retreat
4. Elder Shepherding Responsibilities – typically will include ONE of the following:
 - Small Group Leadership – usually two to three evenings per month
 - Small Group Sphere of Care – visit each group that he is overseeing twice per year, and connect with each leader he is caring for approximately every other month
 - Other Shepherding Role – e.g. youth ministry, etc. (requirements will vary with role)

APPENDIX VI.

Revision History

MARCH 2015 – Book of Church order adopted by unanimous vote of the Council of Elders and majority of gathered congregation.

SEPTEMBER 2015 – Amended (1) Section 5.01 – Purpose of Deacons; (2) Section 5.02 – Qualification of Deacons; (3) Appendix I – Confessional Statement, Section 8 – The Justification of Sinners; (4) and added Section 12 – The Nature of Marriage and Sexuality to Appendix I – Confessional Statement.

MARCH 2018 – Amended Appendix IV – Statement on Divorce and Remarriage