

Constitution and Bylaws of Grace & Truth Bible Church

Adopted by the membership on October 10, 2021

Preamble

Since it pleased Almighty God by His Holy Spirit to call certain of His servants to unite here in Hillsboro, Oregon, under the original name Heritage Baptist Church, incorporated under the laws of the State of Oregon on October 7, 1994, for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and since He has sustained this work under a new name to the present day, we, the members of Grace & Truth Bible Church (GTBC), having searched the Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, have recognized the need to reconstitute ourselves to more closely conform to His will for this church and to prepare ourselves for greater efforts in His name, do hereby adopt this Constitution and Bylaws as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in Scripture and articulated in the Doctrinal Statement and Membership Covenant of this church. These Bylaws express the basic parameters of how the church functions in accordance with the requirements set forth by the State of Oregon. Our ultimate allegiance and authority is Scripture itself.

ARTICLE I — Name

The name of this church is Grace & Truth Bible Church.

ARTICLE II— Purpose

This church exists to glorify Christ our Head through the power of the Spirit by knowing God, loving one another, and gathering worshipers for God. This church is organized exclusively as a religious non-profit organization as defined by state and federal tax law.

Article III—Statement of Faith

The Statement of Faith of this Corporation is that which is adopted by the Elder team. The GTBC Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe as interpreted and applied by our Elder team. We believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God and is the final authority concerning the morality and conduct of mankind. For purposes of church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the Elder team is the church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

ARTICLE IV— Membership

A. Qualifications

Membership shall be comprised of those who:

- a. Are willing to publicly profess their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior
- b. Demonstrate reasonable evidence of regeneration in their lives
- c. Have been baptized following conversion in obedience to Christ
- d. Follow after Christ in obedience to the Scriptures
- e. Are willing to submit to the shepherding of the elders
- f. Agree to support GTBC in worship, giving, and service
- g. Affirm their commitment by signing the GTBC Membership Covenant, thereby indicating their agreement with the church's government and doctrinal statement and by-laws.

B. Privileges and Responsibilities

Members are expected to gather regularly with this local church and contribute to the church's life with their God-granted abilities, spiritual gifts, time, and material resources. Only members may serve in the ministries of the church; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the elders.

Each member of this church commits to:

- a. Love, honor, esteem and pray for each other as well as for the church leaders (Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:11-14).
- b. Preserve the purity and peace of the church through maintaining sound doctrine and godly living (Ephesians 4:1-3).
- c. Put on humility toward one another (Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5).
- d. Submit to the authority and discipline of the church under the care of its leaders (Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 3:10-11; Hebrews 13:18).
- e. Support the church in its ministry with prayers and financial giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7).
- f. Personally participate in the work of ministry according to their God-given gifts and abilities (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12-14; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Ephesians 4:11-32; 1 Peter 4:10- 11).
- g. Willingly support the ministry with regular attendance at worship services (Hebrews 10:23-25) and participation in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

The responsibilities of membership are further elaborated in the Membership Covenant.

C. Membership Process

- a. To be admitted to church membership, an applicant shall read the governing documents of the church (Doctrinal Statement, Membership Covenant, and this Constitution and Bylaws), attend the membership class, and submit a membership application to the elders.

- b. Candidates shall be interviewed by at least one elder.
- c. New members shall be accepted into membership by an affirmation of the majority of the elders.
- d. The elders shall publicly announce the privileges and obligations of the new member as well as the obligations of the assembly to the new member.

D. Termination of Membership.

- a. Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following death, voluntary resignation in writing to the elders, or dismissal by church discipline in accordance with Article VI.
- b. The elders shall have the authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation of membership, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, as defined in Article VI, or for any other reason the church deems necessary or prudent.
- c. Members who have not gathered with the local church through any of its public worship or fellowship opportunities (weekly worship, Sunday school, community group, etc.) for a period of six-months or longer may be removed from membership.

E. Denial of Membership

- a. If, upon review of an application for membership or after meeting with a prospective church member, the Elder Team determines that the applicant does not meet the qualifications given in Section A., membership shall be denied. The decision made by the Elder Team shall be final and there shall be no appeal to any civil court from that decision.

ARTICLE V— Government and Leadership

A. Officers

The biblical offices of the local church are elders and deacons. In addition, the church recognizes the administrative positions under this constitution of Secretary and Treasurer.

B. Authority

The government of GTBC shall be solely vested in the authority of the Elder Team. Although not necessary by constitution, the prayers and wisdom of the church body will be valued and considered. The Elder Team shall consist of no less than three men. In the event that the Elder Team consists of less than three elders, major decisions will require approval by at least 2/3 of the congregation. Such major decisions include:

- a. Recognition and installation of any elder.
- b. Recognition and installation of any pastoral staff.
- c. Approval of GTBC's annual budget.
- d. Any changes to the GTBC Doctrinal Statement or position statements.
- e. Approval of designated gifts.

- f. Assumption of debt
- g. Any amendments to these by-laws.

C. Elders

The church is led by a plurality of elders who are equal in authority but may be specialized in function (Acts 14:23, James 5:14).

- a. Terminology
 - i. This church recognizes that the terms elder, overseer (bishop), and shepherd (pastor) are used interchangeably in Scripture (1 Peter 5:1-3, Acts 20:28) as differing descriptions of the same office.
 - ii. The Council of elders will consist of all elders, both paid and non-paid.
- b. Qualifications
 - i. The elders shall be men gifted by the Spirit who are willing to serve as shepherds and who: have been members of the church for at least six months (to know and be known by the church); meet the Scriptural qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5- 9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3; and who subscribe to and agree with the teachings of the Christian faith as expressed in the Doctrinal Statement and this Constitution and Bylaws.
 - ii. An elder's term of office as a participant on the Elder Team is indefinite, yet always dependent upon his adherence to the standards set forth in Scripture.
 - iii. If at any time a pastor resigns from his pastorate, or if the relations between that pastor and the church become detrimental to the welfare of the church (as determined by quorum of the Elder Team) that relationship may be terminated within 90 days of the date of notice of intention, or a shorter period as determined by the Elder Team.
 - iv. Elders are not above accountability to the church. If any sin or error is exposed in their lives, church members have the freedom and responsibility to confront them in love. The same pattern of confrontation articulated in Matthew 18 would be followed. The admonition presented in 1 Timothy 5:19—not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses— must also be followed.
- c. Function
 - i. In accordance with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Peter 5:1- 3, elders shall devote their time to prayer, to the ministry of the Word, and to shepherding the flock of God.
 - ii. The elders shall be the spiritual overseers of the church and have the full responsibility for the government and discipline of the church (Hebrews 13:7, 17). “The elders” are the lead pastor and elders who are actively serving on the board. The number of elders will depend upon the size and needs of the ministry and the men gifted by God to serve in this way.
 - iii. The elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, to examine and recommend all prospective

candidates for offices and positions, to oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, to conduct worship services, to administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, to equip the membership for the work of the ministry, to encourage sound doctrine and practice, to admonish and correct error, to oversee the process of church discipline, to coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, to mobilize the church for world missions, and to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation share our fundamental convictions.

D. Quorum

- a. A majority of the elders currently serving shall constitute a quorum.
- b. Any decision requiring approval (as determined by the Elder Team), must be approved by a quorum of the Elder Team except for those decisions requiring unanimous approval of the Elder Team.
- c. Though this list is not exhaustive and may be added to as deemed proper by the Elder Team, regular decisions requiring unanimous approval include:
 - i. Recognition and installation of any elder.
 - ii. Recognition and installation of any pastoral staff.
 - iii. Approval of GTBC's annual budget.
 - iv. Election of GTBC's corporate officers.
 - v. Any changes to the GTBC Doctrinal Statement or position statements.
 - vi. Approval of any strategic plans.
 - vii. Approval of designated gifts.
 - viii. Assumption of debt
 - ix. Any amendments to these by-laws.

E. Deacons

The church shall recognize men who are giving of themselves in service to the church and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons. The relationship of the deacons to the elders is one of support and service.

- a. Qualifications—Qualified candidates for serving as deacons shall:
 - i. Have been members of the church for at least six months.
 - ii. Demonstrate that they possess the qualifications set forth in Acts 6:1-7 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
 - iii. Subscribe to and agree to the teachings of the Christian faith as expressed in the Doctrinal Statement and this Constitution and Bylaws.
- b. Function.
 - i. Deacons shall care for the practical and physical needs of the church and community (Acts 6:1-6)
 - ii. The deacons serve as agents of the elders. Where the elders' primary task is to make sure God's Word is rightly understood and applied, the deacons' primary task is make sure God's people are properly cared for.

- iii. The deacons shall seek to free up the elders to focus upon their primary responsibilities (Acts 6:1-6).

F. Corporate Officers

- a. In accordance with the laws of the state of Oregon, corporate officers will be appointed or reconfirmed on an annual basis.
- b. The Elder Team shall appoint or reconfirm the corporate officers of the church at a frequency deemed appropriate by the Elder Team.
- c. Titles of Corporate Officers
 - iv. President
 - v. Vice-President
 - vi. Secretary/Treasurer
- d. These roles are established for the purpose of conformity to state law and have no shepherding or ministerial authority within the church, nor do they incur any specific privilege.

G. Candidacy of Elders and Deacons

- a. Believing that God gifts His church with leaders, the elders will be responsible to identify and mentor men whom God may have placed within this body to be trained and cultivated to serve as elders either within this body or elsewhere.
- b. When the elders determine a need for the addition of another elder to serve the church, the elders shall oversee the process of identification and evaluation of a candidate.
- c. The candidates will then be examined by the elders to confirm their qualifications, and then, if qualified, biographical sketches of candidates shall be provided to the members.

H. Various Ministry Staff and Support

The Elder Team reserves the freedom to appoint leadership to oversee various aspects of ministry within GTBC—both volunteer and paid.

ARTICLE VI— Church Discipline

A. Purposes of Church Discipline

- a. GTBC recognizes the painful yet necessary right to discipline its members according to the New Testament—in particular the expelling of a member from fellowship. The purpose of church discipline is redemptive not punitive.
- b. The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1).

- c. Pursuing the erring member must be done gently (2 Timothy 2:24-25), treating that person respectfully as a brother or sister (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15) with the genuine desire and purpose of restoring that person to full fellowship (Galatians 6:1).

B. Process of Church Discipline

- a. Members of this church and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture as determined by the Elder Team, shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18. Scriptural passages, such as Christ's teaching in Matthew 18:15-17, outline steps to be taken prior to public discipline of a member:
 - i. The sinning individual is confronted privately
 - ii. The sinning individual is confronted by a small group (2-3 people)
 - iii. The sinning individual's failure to repent is announced to the church
 - iv. The sinning individual is removed from fellowship
- b. A thorough explanation of the process of church discipline is explained in the Membership Covenant.

ARTICLE VII – Church Policy

A. Morality and Grounds for Church Discipline

- a. The Bible clearly teaches that sexual immorality, homosexuality, adultery, fornication, abortion, unbiblical divorce or separation, factious or divisive behavior, along with many other habitual sins are offenses grievous unto God and that, apart from genuine confession and repentance, they are sufficient grounds for church discipline (1 Corinthians 6:9–10; 7; Titus 3:9–11; Proverbs 6:16–19).

B. Marriage & Sexuality

- a. According to Scripture, the only morally right definition of marriage is the joining of one natural man and one natural woman (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22–23).
- b. Sexual activity is designed by God to take place in the context of natural marriage (as defined by Article VII. B. a.) and any sexual relations outside of this is sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Galatians 5:19-21).

C. Gender Roles

- a. Men and women are spiritually equal in position before God, yet God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions and roles for men and women in the home and in the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible to serve as elders, to receive licensure, and to be ordained by the church. Women shall not be allowed to teach men or to exercise authority over men (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:8–15; 3:4–5, 12).

D. Discretion of Contributions

- a. In the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, the church may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. Contributors may suggest uses for their contributions, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature.
- b. All contributions shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the elders.

E. The Sole and Final Authority for Our Beliefs

- a. Our Statement of Faith and our Bylaws do not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible, as the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God, speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind; and it is the sole and final source of all that we believe.
- b. For purposes of the church's faith, doctrine, practices, policy, and discipline, the elders are the final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

F. Facilities

- a. The church's facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of church members.
- b. The church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the body of Christ and to bring glory to God.
- c. Although the facilities are not open to the public, we make our facilities available to approved non-members as a witness to our faith, in a spirit of Christian charity, and as a means of demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice.
- d. However, facility use will not be permitted by persons or groups for the purpose of holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict with the church's faith or moral teaching which is summarized in the Bylaws.
- e. Nor may church facilities be used for activities that contradict or are deemed inconsistent with the church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in the Bylaws, but originate from the Bible.
- f. The elders, or an official designee, are the final decision-maker concerning use of the church facilities

ARTICLE VIII—Dispute Resolution

- A. Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Church (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8), this church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts.
- B. All disputes shall be arbitrated by a committee of at least three elders. The committee's finding shall be binding upon the members and if they do not comply, they shall be subject to church discipline.

- C. All members of this church agree to submit to binding arbitration of any matters that cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bringing any civil disagreement before a court of law, except that judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrator(s) may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof.

ARTICLE IX - Indemnification

Indemnification refers to the legal pursuit of seeking compensation for harm or loss.

- A. **Mandatory Indemnification.** If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders determine that the person acted in good faith, with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.
- B. **Permissive Indemnification.** At the discretion of the elders, the church may also indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.
- C. **Procedure.** If a quorum of the elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

ARTICLE XI - Dissolution

- A. In the event of the dissolution of GTBC as a non-profit corporation, the assets of the corporation shall be given to a non-profit corporation of like faith and practice.
- B. Notice of dissolution shall be sent in writing to each member and announced publicly at least five weeks prior to the dissolution meeting.
- C. All recommendations for recipients of the corporation assets shall be given in writing by the membership to the deacons no less than four weeks prior to the dissolution meeting.
- D. It shall be the duty of the deacons to examine all recommendations submitted and to make a recommendation to the elders at least three weeks prior to the dissolution meeting concerning the distribution of the church assets.
- E. The elders shall consider the deacons' recommendation and make their own recommendation to the membership in writing at least two weeks prior to the dissolution meeting.
- F. The recipient corporation shall be determined by a majority of the legal votes cast at a special members' meeting.
- G. The elders and deacons, in the stead of the members of the corporation, shall assume the responsibility of all dissolution proceedings. They shall also seek and obtain legal assistance to complete said proceedings.
- H. The assets of this church shall be dispersed in a way that continues to give glory to God and honor to Christ our Head.

ARTICLE XII - Amendments

These bylaws may be amended as deemed necessary by the Elder Team. Such amendments must be presented to the Elder Team in written form to be rejected or approved by the Elder Team at a future, specified date. Unanimous approval is necessary to amend these by-laws (see Article V, Section C, subsection 5).