

# **CONSTITUTION OF BEYOND GRACE FELLOWSHIP**

## **PREAMBLE**

We, the Membership of Beyond Grace Fellowship, establish and approve the following Articles.

## **ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this local body of Christ shall be Beyond Grace Fellowship, Spokane, WA.

## **ARTICLE II: PURPOSE**

God's purpose in establishing this local expression of the body of Christ is that His manifold wisdom, which He demonstrated in Christ Jesus our Lord, shall be made known (Ephesians 3:10). In response, we purpose to glorify God in the following mutually supportive ways as directed by the Holy Scriptures:

- a. By gathering together for worship and prayer in the unity of the Spirit (Acts 2:42);
- b. By the exercising of spiritual gifts for the edification, maturing, and equipping of God's people for service to God (I Corinthians 12:4-7; II Timothy 3:16, 17);
- c. By proclaiming the gospel of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ to the world through word and practice (Acts 1:8; Matthew 5:13-16);
- d. By encouraging the application of biblical principles to all spheres of life (Matthew 5:13-16; Jeremiah 29:7; I Corinthians 10:31).

## **ARTICLE III: STATEMENT OF FAITH**

### **ABOUT THE BIBLE**

We believe that the Bible is the very Word of God. We believe God is the originator of the Bible and that it was given through the instrumentality of chosen and inspired men. Through it God reveals Himself and His will to us. The Bible is infallible and completely reliable. The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are

the unique, full and final authority on all matters of faith and practice in the believer's life as well as the church.

### **ABOUT GOD**

We believe in the Triune God - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge one God in three persons.

We believe that God the Father created and sustains the universe. He is loving, compassionate, just and kind. His deepest desire is to live in an intimate relationship with all people.

We believe that, because of His desire to live in relationship with us, God became a human being. Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, is fully God and fully human. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus made it possible for all people to live in a relationship with God. We believe Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Through Him and Him alone can people enter into a relationship with God.

We believe the Holy Spirit is the presence of Jesus Christ within and among us. He was sent into the world by the Father and the Son to apply to humankind the saving work of Christ. At the point of salvation He permanently indwells every believer to become the source of assurance, strength and wisdom in life.

### **ABOUT PEOPLE**

We believe in the worth and value of all people. Created in God's image, all people have dignity. Their worth is dependent, not on accomplishments, but on God's love. Because God sees humanity as worth dying for, we affirm and acknowledge the dignity and value of every human being.

At the same time we acknowledge that people are separated from God because of sin. Sin permeates and corrupts our entire being and burdens us more and more with fear, hostility, guilt and misery. We joyfully proclaim the Good News that because of Jesus Christ, forgiveness is a possibility for all people. It is that forgiveness that restores fallen humanity's worth.

### **ABOUT SALVATION**

We acknowledge that salvation is not procured through family lineage, good works, national heritage or by virtue of religion. Salvation is appropriated only through a definitive surrender of the will by receiving Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior. The salvation experience continues beyond saving grace as the indwelling Christ works in us to make us whole.

## **ABOUT THE CHURCH**

There is one true Church in the world, comprised of all those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The Bible identifies the church, be it a local congregation or the worldwide fellowship of believers, as the Body of Christ. God, in His word, calls believers to gather together for worship, fellowship, service, growth and outreach to the world. Wherever the people of God gather there is the local expression of the church.

## **ABOUT JESUS' RETURN**

We believe in and anticipate the return of Jesus Christ. At that time, the progress of human history will cease and a judgment will be exacted upon each individual. Unbelievers, due to their rejection of God, will be separated from God into eternal condemnation. Believers will be received into eternal communion with God. Though we don't know the day and hour, we proclaim His imminent return to inspire all people to make the most of God's gift of life and opportunities of evangelism today.

## **ARTICLE IV: FORM OF GOVERNMENT**

The government of this church shall be under the headship of Jesus Christ and in Obedience to the Word of God (Colossians 1:17-18). Under Christ's leadership, Beyond Grace Fellowship shall be ruled by Elders (pastors) in accordance with this Constitution, fulfilling the Biblical responsibilities defined in the By-Laws. Likewise, Deacons will administer the affairs of this church, under the oversight of the Elders, in accordance with this Constitution, fulfilling the Biblical responsibilities defined in the By-Laws.

### **SECTION 1. ELDERS**

Elders shall be people called of God who are qualified according to I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and I Peter 5:2-3, and have accepted the Beyond Grace Statement of Faith. Unless providentially hindered, there shall be no less than two Elders at any given time, and up to as many as the Lord calls to the under-shepherding role. Each Elder will serve as long as he remains Biblically qualified, available, and desires to continue to serve.

## **SECTION 2. DEACONS**

Deacons shall be people called of God who are qualified according to I Timothy 3:8-13 and have accepted the Beyond Grace Fellowship Statement of Faith. Unless providentially hindered, there shall be no fewer than two Deacons at any given time, and as many as the Lord calls to this ministering role. Each Deacon will serve for a period of three years with the option of serving additional terms as long as he/she remains Biblically qualified, available, and desires to continue to serve.

## **SECTION 3. OTHER LEADERSHIP**

All positions of leadership associated with Beyond Grace Fellowship shall be filled with members. This includes all teaching positions (Sunday School, home fellowship small groups, etc.), the leading of worship services, and leadership positions for all other recognized ministry areas. All teaching and preaching from these leaders is expected to be consistent with the official Statement of Faith of Beyond Grace Fellowship.

## **SECTION 4. SUMMARY OF LEADERSHIP GROUPS**

THE ELDERS – the pastors of the church

THE DIRECTORS – The pastors/elders, deacons and treasurer

THE CHURCH COUNCIL – The pastors, deacons, treasurer, staff members, and ministry leaders.

## **ARTICLE V: CORPORATION STATUS**

Beyond Grace Fellowship is a religious corporation as filed with the State of Washington and is not organized for the private gain of any person. It is organized under the Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law exclusively for religious purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

## **ARTICLE VI: MEMBERSHIP**

Membership is about belonging. In the Bible we are invited, first of all, not to join the church but to join God! The nuptial invitation of Jesus is simply to belong to him forever. We then become a child of God in God's family (the family of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; John 1:12); we call God *Abba*;

we dwell in the love of God, which is the love eternally expressed between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Becoming a Christian is simply getting “into” God.

Once joining God, we are automatically members of the people of God. We belong to one another. It is impossible to be in Christ alone. We are members together, joined together, heirs together, embodied together, growing together, being built together and held together. The local church is a place to belong, serve, grow and know God together.

Members of Beyond Grace Fellowship are those who evidence faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, as well as a commitment to this body of believers, and affirm the basic tenets of faith reflected in the Constitution, By-Laws and Statement of Faith of Beyond Grace Fellowship

#### **ARTICLE VII: DISSOLUTION**

In the event of the dissolution of Beyond Grace Fellowship by the Directors and a majority vote of the membership of Beyond Grace Fellowship, no member, officer of the church, or private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets. Upon dissolution, assets of the church shall first be used to pay any outstanding debts. Following this, the remaining assets of the corporation shall be given to a non-profit corporation of like faith and practice.

The selection of recipients, as well as the timing of the actual transfers, shall be determined by vote of the Directors with consideration given to recommendations made by the Congregation. Actions required to carry out the dissolution shall be performed by the Directors, who shall seek out legal assistance to complete the process.

#### **ARTICLE VIII: AMENDMENTS**

The Directors shall solicit comments and recommendations from the membership of Beyond Grace Fellowship on all proposed amendments to this Constitution and By-Laws at least thirty days prior to their formal approval and incorporation. After evaluating responses from the membership, final approval of amendments shall be made by the Elder

Board at a regularly scheduled Elder Board meeting and ratified by a majority of voting members at a specially called meeting of the congregation.

# **BY LAWS OF BEYOND GRACE FELLOWSHIP**

## **ARTICLE 1: MEMBERSHIP**

### **SECTION 1. QUALIFICATIONS**

Membership in Beyond Grace Fellowship affirms the Biblical principle of belonging with the foundation of grace. Affirming Article VI of the constitution, those considered members of Beyond Grace Fellowship are those adults (18 and above) who have exhibited the following:

1. Made public their belonging to God, and
2. Made a commitment to Beyond Grace Fellowship for a period of at least 3 months evidenced by
  - Regular worship
  - Serving in the ministry of the church
  - Financially supporting the ministry as God has provided.

Each person who desires membership will have an opportunity to make public their membership by signing a “Membership Covenant” at a congregation meeting and therefore will enjoy full benefits of membership and become immediately eligible to vote on church matters. While membership is reserved for those 18 and above, special provision can be granted by the elders for a youth who has demonstrated spiritual maturity and formally desires membership.

### **SECTION 2. PRIVILEGES**

Each person attending Beyond Grace Fellowship is considered part of the church family and has the privilege of pastoral care and oversight, the Lord’s Supper, Baptism, weddings, funerals and counseling. Only members may be Elders, Deacons, teachers, or serve in any ministry leadership position.

## **ARTICLE 2: CHURCH MEETINGS**

There shall be at least one formal Directors meeting each month for the conduct of business associated with oversight of Beyond Grace Fellowship. This is the formal meeting of the Elders, Deacons and the Treasurer. This meeting shall be open to the entire body to attend. However, only Elders and Deacons may vote when a vote is required. Other meetings may be called by the Elders (with limited attendance) to address sensitive shepherding issues not appropriate for public exposure, extended times of prayer, and mutual shepherding.

There shall be at least one formal Church Council meeting every quarter. The Church Council is comprised of the pastor, other church staff members, directors of church ministries, the deacons, and the treasurer. The Church Council shall serve the church by leading in planning, coordinating, conducting, and evaluating the ministries and programs of the church and its organizations. The primary functions of the Church Council shall be to recommend to the church suggested objectives and church goals; to review and coordinate ministry and program; to recommend to the church the use of leadership, calendar time, and other resources according to program priorities; and to evaluate achievements in terms of church objectives and goals.

Each meeting group will designate a recording secretary to keep accurate record of the proceeding.

## **ARTICLE III: APPOINTMENT OF CHURCH OFFICERS**

### **SECTION 1. QUALIFICATIONS**

God is the one who calls a person to the task of Elder or Deacon, as He is the one who so equips the person both with the spiritual gifts and character needed for the office (Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11). It is therefore the responsibility of the church to discover and evaluate those whom God has called to the office of Elder and Deacon (Acts 6:3). This evaluation shall be based upon the biblical qualifications found in I Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, and I Peter 5:23.

Each Elder and Deacon will serve as long as he/she remains Biblically qualified, available, and desires to continue to serve. A yearly review with the Directors will be conducted to assess continuing suitability, availability and desire. An Elder or Deacon may be granted an approved leave of absence from Elder or Deacon responsibilities.

## SECTION 2. PROCEDURE

A candidate for either office may be recommended to the Directors by any member of Beyond Grace Fellowship. Anyone who believes that God is calling them may also seek the counsel of the Directors for possible candidacy (I Timothy 3:1). It is the responsibility of the Elders to examine the qualifications of a candidate for either office. In addition, the Deacons are to examine and approve a candidate for the office of Deacon.

If there is consensus among the Directors regarding the qualifications of a candidate, then the candidate will be presented to the membership for consideration, prayer, and a time of evaluation (I Thessalonians 5:12; Acts 6:3-5). If consensus cannot be reached by the Directors, then the candidacy will be suspended. A period of at least one month will be given for the membership to pray and ask questions of the candidate (or the Directors) with regard to his/her qualifications. At the end of this time period, the Directors will evaluate both the responses from the membership and the status of the candidate. If there is still consensus among the Directors as to the qualifications of the candidate, the person will then be brought before the membership for a vote. A 2/3 majority vote will affirm the call of the candidate. During a worship service he/she will be formally presented and acknowledged as one whom God has called to the task of Elder or Deacon.

## SECTION 3. REMOVAL

**A. The removal of Pastor/Elders:** The dismissal of any Pastor/Elder shall not be considered until the person in question has been approached relative to the reason(s) for proposed dismissal by a delegation of at least two elders and/or deacons. Any reason(s) for dismissal shall be consistent with requirements for a Pastor/Elder (Article III, section 1 and Article IV). The Pastor/Elder under consideration shall be notified in writing of the reason(s) for the recommended dismissal, and at his discretion may be represented by two members. If, after examination, the Directors recommend dismissal by an affirmative vote of at least four-fifths (4/5) of the total number of the Directors, two (2) weeks notification will be given to the congregation in order to solicit additional information that might overturn the vote for dismissal. The congregation ratifies the removal by a 2/3 majority vote.

**B. The removal of Deacon(s):** If a deacon is perceived to have conduct or beliefs incompatible with the requirements for a deacon (Article III, section 1 and Article IV), at least two witnesses, not from the same family, shall bring this to the attention of the Elders which will investigate the charges. If the charges are substantiated, the Elders will dismiss the offending member by a majority. If it becomes obvious to church members that the Elders are failing to act on legitimate concerns, a 2/3 vote of the congregation will automatically remove the Deacon.

## ARTICLE IV: RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH OFFICERS

### SECTION 1. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS

Under authority of scripture, the duty of Elders is to oversee the spiritual life of the church by:

- a. **Preaching/Teaching.** All Elders attend to the ministry of the Word through teaching and preaching (Acts 6:4; Ephesians 4:11-12; I Thessalonians 5:12; I Timothy 3:2; 5:17; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9). They shall oversee all matters concerning the conduct of public worship, and the spiritual growth and evangelistic witness of the congregation (Ephesians. 4:11-13; Matthew 28:19-20).
- b. **Shepherding.** All Elders carry on watchcare and oversight responsibilities relating to the flock entrusted into its care. (I Peter 5:2-3; Acts 20:28; Matthew 18:15-29; I Corinthians 5:13; Galatians 6:1-2; Titus 3:9-11). Elders use the Word of God to instruct, edify, encourage, admonish, and exhort the body (I Thessalonians 2:11; II Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 13:17; Psalm 23:2-3
- c. **Ruling.** The Elders are responsible to exercise authority in all areas of doctrine and practice. The Elders have the final authority over the activities of the Board of Deacons and all other ministries of the church, and have final authority over the use of the church property. (Heb. 13:17; I Thessalonians 5:12-13; I Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17). Authority to carry out these responsibilities is shared equally by all the Elders (Romans 12:8; I Peter 5:3).
- d. **Praying.** Elders minister to the body through persistent corporate and individual intercessory prayer (Acts 2:42; I Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:14; Acts 6:4).

### SECTION 2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEACONS

The duty of Deacons is to assist the Elders by:

- a. **Benevolence.** Dispensing benevolence funds according to the physical and spiritual needs of the body and remaining aware of the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the body (Acts 6:1-7; I Timothy 3:8-13).
- b. **Property.** Exercising caretaker and stewardship responsibilities over all church properties and the acquiring or disposing of all church property of any kind

- c. Finances. Exercising oversight of financial matters of the church, including all expenses throughout the year, the annual review of the church budget, staff salaries, and financial needs of those whose ministries the church supports.
- d. Support the pastors/elders in prayer, counsel, advice and guidance. (2 Cor. 1:11; Phil. 1:19)

### **SECTION 3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CONGREGATION**

The congregation shall make the decisions in the following issues:

- a. Purchase and sale of property;
- b. Calling pastors/elders and the dissolution of pastoral relationship
- c. Deacon election

In addition, the congregation has the ability to overturn any decision of the Council if the vote is by a two-thirds margin.

There shall be at least one annual Beyond Grace Fellowship meeting for conduct of business that affects the entire body. This meeting will be held in the December - January time period and will include presentation of the budget for the coming year.

In addition, other meetings may be called or established for worship, fellowship, or business as required. These additional meetings are to be approved by the Elder board and may be requested by any member of Beyond Grace Fellowship.

### **ARTICLE V: FINANCES**

In order to be above reproach before God and one another as stewards of all the Lord has entrusted to Beyond Grace Fellowship, it is important to establish proper financial accountability (I Timothy 6:9,10; I Corinthians 16:3,4). To ensure this, the Deacons will exercise oversight of all financial matters of the church, under Elder authority. To support this responsibility, a Treasurer will be nominated by the Elders and elected by a two-thirds vote of the congregation and be assigned to account for all Beyond Grace Fellowship finances. The duties of the Treasurer are to:

- a. Ensure that no expenditure exceeds its annual item allocation without Deacon Board approval;
- b. Minister closely with the Deacons to ensure timely dispensing of funds when required for various needs of the body;
- c. Oversee the counting and banking of all funds collected by the church;

- d. Oversee the maintaining of an accurate accounting of funds received and dispensed by the church;
- e. Report the financial position of the church at the annual financial review in December - January;
- f. Submit a preliminary budget for the next year to the Directors;
- g. Make available to the Directors a monthly, written financial statement;
- h. Recommend to the Deacons policies and practices relating to financial management that are not explicitly covered by this Constitution and By-Laws. Detailed descriptions of the procedures to be followed relative to the above responsibilities are contained in the following sections.

### **SECTION 1. COLLECTIONS**

After each service in which collections are received, the Treasurer, or his/her designee, and one other person (preferably a Deacon or a designated Bookkeeper) shall count the receipts and sign a register recording the amount. The Treasurer is responsible to ensure the deposit of any collections and to keep accurate records of each individual's or family's giving, if known.

### **SECTION 2. PAYMENTS**

All payments or reimbursements must be approved by either a Deacon or Elder who is not directly involved with the transaction. Benevolence payments must be approved by the Deacons prior to actual distribution.

### **SECTION 3. MONTHLY PROCEDURES**

A monthly church expense and budget report will be prepared by the Treasurer to be presented to the Directors. Independently, a Deacon will review the report and verify that proper procedures were followed. Each employed staff member of Beyond Grace Fellowship who requires expense reimbursement will submit an expense reimbursement report for review by the Treasurer and a separate Deacon. The monthly expense and budget report shall be available for review by any church member on request. However, confidentiality of individual or family giving will be maintained.

#### **SECTION 4. ANNUAL PROCEDURES**

The Treasurer shall compile a new calendar year budget, based upon input from the Elders, the Deacons, and other ministry leaders. It shall be presented first to the Deacons, then to the Elders, and then to the entire church during December or January. The annual budget is to be made available to the church for review for at least one month prior to formal adoption by the Directors. Whenever the Directors must make significant budget adjustments (five per cent or more of the total annual budget), these will be presented to the church for review prior to formal adoption by the Directors. The Deacons shall appoint an appropriate individual to review the year's financial records and report findings back to the Deacon and Elder Boards.

#### **SECTION 5. SALARY COMPENSATION**

Salaries to be paid to Beyond Grace Fellowship staff shall be recommended by the Treasurer and follow the same procedure for approval as the annual budget. Any person receiving compensation from the church shall not be in a position to approve the amount of the salary.