

The Constitution of Grace Baptist Church
River Rouge, MI

PREAMBLE

The Bible admonishes us saying, "But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner." (1 Cor 14:40) To this end do we, members of the Grace Baptist Church in River Rouge, Michigan, having placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, having followed Him in believer's baptism, and accepting the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God, solemnly and sincerely set forth the following Constitution by which we willingly and cheerfully agree to be governed.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this church shall be Grace Baptist Church in River Rouge, Michigan.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The governing purpose of this Church shall be to glorify God by proclaiming His Word so that people are evangelized with the gospel of Christ and then brought to full spiritual maturity.

ARTICLE III - AUTONOMY

The Grace Baptist Church in River Rouge, Michigan, shall be and remain an independent, autonomous Baptist church. It may, as it deems appropriate, participate in fellowship and activity with organizations of like faith and practice for the promotion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ so long as said organization does not infringe upon the independence or autonomy of this Church. The Church shall remain free from involvement with organizations or institutions that contradict or compromise the clearly revealed truth of Scripture.

ARTICLE IV - CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and therefore is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. As expressive of our faith, we hereby adopt the New Hampshire Confession of Faith with the premillennial and other additions. (See Appendix 1.)

ARTICLE V - COVENANT

Having been led by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and, on the profession of faith, having been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We purpose by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in the knowledge of God through His Word and in holiness; to promote her prosperity and spirituality; regularly to attend her services and functions; to sustain her worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to pray for, and submit to her leaders; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry and expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all the world.

We also purpose to walk daily in a manner that honors the Lord Jesus Christ; to maintain personal and family devotions; to educate our children biblically; to seek the salvation of our family and acquaintances; to avoid entanglements with worldly practices and amusements, and entangling alliances with unbelievers in accordance with 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; to be honest and faithful in our business, and gracious in our speech and conduct; to avoid participation in activities that would bring reproach to His name; to be zealous in our love and service for the Lord; to discern our spiritual gifts and employ them in this local church so that the lost may be saved and fellow believers may be edified.

We further purpose to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other

in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy of speech; to be slow in taking offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay; to require for ourselves and each other to walk in obedience to the moral precepts laid down so plainly in the Word of God as not to need definition, and to encourage one another to walk in these ways of obedience; and to submit to the encouragement of the Church to godly living, and if necessary, to her discipline.

We moreover purpose that, when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with another church of like faith and practice, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of the Bible.

ARTICLE VI - MEMBERSHIP

Membership in this Church is open to anyone who has received by faith the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, been baptized by immersion after salvation, desires to share in the fellowship and ministry of this Church, and agrees to be governed as a member by her constitution.

SECTION I – RECEPTION OF MEMBERS

- I. Persons desiring membership shall make their desire known to the Church and shall be instructed concerning the constitution of Grace Baptist Church and its philosophy of ministry.
- II. All applicants for membership shall first be interviewed by the Pastor and Deacons, who shall make a recommendation to the congregation.
- III. Members may be received by unanimous vote of the members present at any congregational meeting or public meeting of the Church:
 - A. By vote of the Church upon baptism. (Except in extraordinary cases, only those desiring membership shall be baptized.)
 - B. By vote of the Church upon reception of a transfer letter from a church of like faith and practice certifying membership in good standing.
 - C. By Christian experience, having been scripturally baptized in a Church of like faith and practice but unable to secure his letter.
 - D. If, having been under church discipline or removal from the roll, he presents himself to ask for reinstatement into membership. Every reasonable action shall have been taken to correct the issue which led to exclusion.
- IV. Members shall be received by unanimous vote of the voting members present at any public meeting of the Church. A dissenting vote shall call for a re-examination of the pertinent facts by the Pastor and Deacons. If the Pastor and Deacons make the same recommendation to the Church, the two-thirds vote of voting members present and voting shall constitute a favorable vote.

SECTION 2 - ACTIVE MEMBERS

Only active members in attendance and not under discipline shall have voice and vote at any congregational meeting. Active membership requires attendance at no less than four of the previous twelve services of the Church (Sunday morning worship, Sunday evening worship, and midweek service) and thirteen of the previous thirty-nine services of the church prior to said congregational meeting. This Church will have no absentee or proxy ballots.

- I. Attendance records shall be kept by registration cards, Sunday School or Bible Study records, or other records of the Church. The Church Clerk shall be responsible for maintenance of the eligibility list, which shall be presented to the Pastor, or in his absence, the moderator of the congregational meeting.
- II. Those involuntarily prevented from required minimum of services shall be eligible to have voice and vote at any congregational meeting for which they would be otherwise eligible to participate.
- III. The Church shall be the final authority for determining the eligibility of any member, whether active or inactive, for voice.

SECTION 3 - INACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

Inactive members are those who have failed to meet the requirements prescribed in Article VI, Section 2. They shall be ineligible to have voice or vote at any congregational meeting.

- I. After three consecutive months of absence, the member shall be placed on probationary status and shall be notified of his status, and urged to return. Attendance at thirteen of the subsequent thirty-nine services shall restore eligibility.
- II. At each annual congregational meeting, all members on probationary status who have not begun attending again shall be removed from the membership, their names having been publicly posted for two Sundays prior to the meeting.
- III. Members who are involuntarily inactive shall be exempt from Sec. 3 and shall be eligible to have voice and vote, but shall not hold office.

SECTION 4 - DISMISSAL OF MEMBERS

Members may be dismissed in the following ways.

- I. By letter of commendation and transfer to other churches of like faith and practice, granted by the Church upon recommendation of the Deacons, provided that said member is not under church discipline. Written notification of the Church's action shall be sent to the requesting Church by the Church Clerk.
- II. By removal for inactivity under the guidelines of section 3.
- III. By Discipline

Since mutual accountability in the context of loving relationships is vital to spiritual growth, members of the Church should engage in the regular encouragement and exhortation of one another to grow in Christ (Hebrews 3:13; Romans 15:14; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 13:17). Where open sin continues, the Church shall take biblical steps of correction both for the sake of restoration and the purity of the body.

- A. In such cases where a member fails to uphold the Constitution of the Church, or sows discord among the body, or conducts himself in such a way as to damage the name of Christ and the testimony of the Church, the Church shall make every attempt to reconcile the member through the biblical procedures outlined in passages such as Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Corinthians 5, and Titus 3:10-11.

Grounds for discipline include but shall not be limited to things such as the slandering of the character of any member of the Church; hurtful destructive criticism of the methods and practices of the Church, the Pastor, or any officer of the Church; the circulation of petitions on church premises or at church functions that have not been authorized by the Pastor, Deacons, or the Church; or involvement in any unstated meeting called concerning the Church, its Pastor, or its members, whether on or off Church premises that does not include an invitation to the Pastor and Deacons.

- B. Offenses shall be handled in accordance with the pattern of Matthew 18:15-18. The Deacons will assist the Pastor in making a recommendation to the congregation concerning any unresolved matter. Any member so charged may appeal his case to the Deacons, and shall have the right of hearing before the Church. Disciplinary action shall remove the member from all offices and duties, and may prevent his attendance or participation at any fellowship meeting of the Church.
- C. In cases where a majority of the Deacons are under investigation, the Church shall appoint a committee from the Church to hear the charges and recommend action.

ARTICLE VII - FINANCIAL SUPPORT

This Church shall be supported by the voluntary giving of offerings by God's people. Each member should give systematically, regularly, proportionately, sacrificially, and cheerfully of his substance to the Lord's work through the local church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8, 9). No other means of raising money shall be used to support this Church.

ARTICLE VIII - CHURCH OFFICERS

The biblical officers of this Church shall consist of Pastor(s) and Deacons. Other offices shall be appointed as necessary.

Inasmuch as one the chief tasks of the Pastor is the oversight of the work of the Church, it is proper that there be one Pastor who is the true overseer of the work and ministry of each local church. Although there may be other men called by God to perform pastoral ministries in the church, the ministries of these men will be carried on under the oversight of the man called by the congregation to be its pastor.

I. Pastor

- A. The Senior Pastor shall be a man called of God to the work of the Pastor, regularly ordained by the Church or by a Baptist church of like faith and practice, who meets the biblical qualifications laid down in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. If the man called by the congregation is not ordained, he shall be ordained within one year of his call.
- B. In the absence of a Pastor, a pulpit committee made up of the Deacons shall thoroughly investigate and prayerfully consider candidates and make a report to the congregation at least once a month. As the Holy Spirit leads, they shall present the name of one candidate at a time for approval by the Church at a special meeting called for that purpose. Before the candidate is presented to the Church to be voted upon, the pulpit committee must secure his permission and shall present to the Church, at the time of voting, a signed statement by the proposed candidate signifying his unreserved acceptance of the Church covenant, doctrinal statement, and constitution. The candidate shall preach on the Sunday prior to the congregational meeting at which the election will take place. The pulpit committee shall have discretion as to any additional preaching opportunities. The Pastor shall be called by three-quarters majority vote of active members present.
- C. It shall be the duty of the Pastor to carry out the roles of elder, overseer, and shepherd as revealed in Scripture. He shall preach at the regularly scheduled services of the Church, shall administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and perform the various duties incumbent upon his office. He shall be responsible to secure adequate help for the ministries of the church. He shall secure pulpit supply in his absence and shall secure other speakers as appropriate for the edification of the Church and the evangelization of the lost. With the prayerful support of the Church, he shall have charge of all Church meetings. At his option, he shall be moderator in all Deacons' meetings and in all congregational meetings of the Church except those meetings pertaining to himself or his family, and he shall have supervision of and be *ex-officio* member of all committees and subsidiary Church organizations.
- D. Term of office
 - 1. The Pastor shall be called by the Church for an indefinite term, subject to a Call and Agreement. It is recognized that the Pastor is called of God to this pulpit (Ephesians 4:11-16). In extending to him its call, the Church is merely recognizing God's call. He shall continue until such time as he resigns, or his resignation is requested by the Church.

If at any time the Pastor differs with the doctrinal statement or moral requirements of his office, the Deacons shall take appropriate action, include public airing if necessary. If he refuses to repent, a congregational meeting shall be called, where a three-fourths vote of active members present shall result in immediate dismissal.

2. In case either the Pastor or the Church desire to sever the pastoral relationship, not less than one month's notice shall be given by either party so desiring. However, this period of time may be shortened by mutual agreement. In either case, the Pastor may only preach or perform pastoral or administrative duties at the discretion of the Deacons. If the Pastor abandons his office, no salary, benefits, or housing is due him.
3. The call of the Pastor may be terminated by the Church upon recommendation of the Deacons and three-quarters vote of the church, at a congregational meeting, called by a majority of the Deacons and announced for two Sundays prior to the meeting. Following such recommendation, the Pastor shall perform only those duties expressly authorized by the Deacons, pending church vote.

Salary, benefits, and housing shall be at the discretion of the Church. Pastoral duties shall be performed at the discretion of the Deacons.

II. Pastoral Assistants

This includes anyone who receives all or part of his financial support from this Church and whose duties are spiritual in nature and performed in the Church.

The Senior Pastor holds the privilege to select whomever he wills to fill other pastoral positions. Each selectee will be presented to the Deacons for their approval, and having received that, to the congregation for their ratification. All Pastoral Assistants are an extension of the office of Pastor and as such shall meet all applicable biblical qualifications. They shall be responsible to and under the direction of the Senior Pastor, and shall serve under the terms of Article VIII, Section I. D.

III. Deacons

- A. The Deacons shall number as many as deemed necessary by the Church to accomplish sufficiently the work of the deacons in the Church. They shall be elected by a two-thirds majority vote of the congregation at the annual congregational meeting. Special elections shall be called as necessary.
- B. Deacons shall meet all qualifications of Scripture as expressed in 1 Timothy 3:8-12 and Acts 6:1-6.
- C. The deacons shall fulfill the role of servants to the church body. They shall organize themselves in such manner as they deem necessary. They shall be responsible for the care of members and the care of the physical plant; for the set up, serving, and clean up of communion; for preparation for baptism, and shall assist the Pastor during baptism. They shall be responsible to count and record all financial contributions on a rotating basis. Signed statements of receipt shall be given to the Pastor and Treasurer weekly.

They shall, under the leadership of the Pastor, present an annual budget to the church for approval. They shall disburse church funds in accordance with the approved budget, and may spend up to one thousand dollars without congregational approval. They shall arrange a full audit of the church books in years ending in zero or five, or when deemed necessary by the Church or themselves. They shall have authority to maintain and dispose of personal property of the Church. They shall represent the Church legally in all matters necessary.

During times when the church is without a pastor, they shall act as a pulpit committee and shall arrange that the duties of the Office of Pastor are carried out.

One Deacon shall be appointed by the Deacons to act as treasurer of the Good Fellowship Fund. This fund shall be collected at least once a month from the congregation separately from the regular Church offering, and shall be counted by the Deacons. It shall be used at the discretion of the deacons to assist members of the church in special circumstances and will be subject to an audit only by the Deacons. The ministries of mercy that shall be performed by this fund shall be kept confidential.

They shall serve as a nominating committee, to prepare a list of qualified nominees for the office of Deacon. They may receive written nominations from the congregation. All nominations must be made and posted two Sundays prior to the annual congregational meeting.

They shall fill all other functions and roles prescribed in this Constitution.

D. Term of Office

1. The term of Deacon shall run for three years. Any candidate for the office of Deacon shall be an active member of this church at least one year prior to his election. Further said candidate shall be at least twenty-one years old.
2. No Deacon shall succeed himself. However, when there are not sufficient men in the church qualified to fill the office of Deacon, the Church may vote on retaining deacons whose terms otherwise expire. This extra term is for one year only and shall not prevent him from being eligible for a new three year term at the next annual election, unless there are sufficient qualified men to fill the office.

E. Dismissal

Any Deacon who is neglectful or indifferent of his office, or who evidences a spirit that, in the judgment of the Pastor and other Deacons, is not in keeping with the scriptural demands of the office may be dismissed by a three-fourths vote of the Deacons.

IV. Treasurer

- A. The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Senior Pastor and Deacons for an indefinite term of service.
- B. It shall be the responsibility of the Treasurer to keep an accurate record of all receipts and disbursements and to furnish the Pastor and Deacons with monthly financial statements, and to furnish the congregation with quarterly and annual reports. He shall be responsible for overseeing the financial operation of the church under the direction of the Pastor.

He shall make all disbursements by check as ordered by the Deacons and according to the approved church budget. In the absence of the Treasurer, the Treasurer of the Deacons, in compliance with banking requirements, shall sign all checks. The Treasurer shall be bonded.

V. Financial Secretary

- A. The Financial Secretary shall be appointed by the Senior Pastor and Deacons for an indefinite term of service.
- B. It shall be the duty of the Financial Secretary to distribute offering envelopes and keep an accurate record of all Church monies received. He shall deposit all church offerings as soon as possible in the name of the Church in a checking account at a reputable bank approved by the Deacons.

He shall keep an accurate record of individual contributors and present to them a quarterly and annual statement concerning their giving for income tax purposes. At the Annual meeting, he shall present a summary report of all receipts by category excluding individual names. The Financial Secretary shall be bonded.

VII. Clerk

- A. The Church Clerk shall be appointed by the Senior Pastor for an indefinite term of service.
- B. The Clerk shall keep a correct and permanent record of all the business meetings of the Church, sign all letters of dismissal, take charge of all church records, maintain a register of members in which shall be

noted any changes as may occur, and maintain a list of active members. The Clerk shall enter into the records of the Church current events in the life of the Church that are likely to be of historical value, making the Church records a true and complete history of the Church. The Church Clerk shall be in charge of the official church copies of the Constitution and of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

VIII. Christian Education Director

- A. The Christian Education Director shall be appointed by the Pastor for an indefinite term of service.
- B. It shall be the duty of the Christian Education Director to have the general supervision of the various departments of the Bible school under the direction of the Pastor. He shall be an *ex-officio* member of all Christian education organizations and teams. He shall keep an accurate record of the attendance of the Bible school. He shall prepare a list of absentees and prospects for the teachers of the Bible school.

ARTICLE IX - COMMITTEES

All committees other than those provided for with in this constitution shall be *ad hoc*, shall be elected or appointed to fill a temporary need, and shall be dissolved when the need has been met. Such committees shall be created by the Pastor and Deacons as they deem necessary to the fruitful operation of the Church, and shall be subject to annual review by the Pastor and Deacons.

ARTICLE X - THE MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH

I. Worship, Teaching, and Evangelism

- A. Public meetings shall be held for worship, teaching, and evangelism each Sunday and during the week.
- B. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall ordinarily be observed on the first Sunday of the month.
- C. The ordinance of Baptism may be observed at any stated Church service.
- D. Special meetings may be held upon recommendation of the Pastor.

II. Congregational Meetings.

- A. The annual congregational meeting shall be the last Wednesday in January of each year. Deacons shall be elected at the annual meeting and shall assume their duties upon the adjournment of the annual meeting. At this meeting the annual reports of all phases of the Church work shall be given in writing. The Church fiscal year shall run from January 1 through December 31. All employee contracts shall correspond to the church fiscal year.
- B. There shall be quarterly congregational meetings on the last Wednesday of April, July, and October unless otherwise specified by the Pastor and Deacons with notice posted for one week (two Sundays) prior to the meeting and announced each Sunday during that period.
- C. Special business meetings may be called by the Pastor and Deacons, providing that notice of such meetings shall be posted for one week (two Sundays) prior to the meeting and announced each Sunday during that period. However, if the Deacons believe that an emergency exists, they may waive the time requirement by unanimous recommendation.
- D. Persons may be received into membership and voluntary letters of dismissal granted at any meeting of the Church. No quorum is required for such action.
- E. Active members of this church eighteen years and older are eligible to vote.
- F. Quorum at any Congregational Meeting of this Church shall require one-fourth of the active members to be

in attendance at said Business Meeting. (See previous for definition of active members). A majority vote shall decide all matters, except the calling or dismissing of the Pastor or Pastoral Assistants, amending the constitution, purchase, sale, mortgage, or donation of real property of the church, which shall require a three-fourths majority vote, and the election of Deacons which shall require two-thirds majority vote.

- G. *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be the parliamentary rule of authority in all matters not specifically covered herein or by special rules of procedure adopted by the Church.

ARTICLE XI – AUXILIARY CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

All groups and organizations within the church shall be subject to the membership of the Church, unless otherwise noted in the constitution. They shall make no rules or regulations contrary to this constitution. All officers of such groups or organizations must be active members of the Church. Any person ceasing to be such shall forfeit all offices and shall return any property, money, books, and minutes of the organization within one week.

No meetings or other activities may be held when they conflict with any regular or special services of the Church, except by permission of the Pastor.

All such Groups shall be under the supervision of the Pastor and shall be responsible to the Church as a whole. The Church may call for a report from any subsidiary organization at any time, and may dissolve any such organization by a majority vote, after posting a one week (two Sundays) notice. Should any subsidiary organization cease to exist, all monies and properties shall be turned over the Church.

All financial dealings of auxiliary organizations must be carried on in accordance with this constitution and the policies of the Church. Financial reports shall be provided as requested by the Church, or by a member of the organization.

All activities must be in accord with the mission of the Church, and all speakers must be approved by the Pastor.

ARTICLE XII - AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended at any business meeting of the Church by a three-fourths majority vote, provided that such amendment, in writing, shall have been approved by the Pastor and Deacons and read at the regular services one week (two Sundays) preceding said meeting and posted immediately preceding said meeting in a conspicuous place within the Church building. The Pastor and Deacons shall review the Constitution from time to time for any needed changes or additions.