



GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Doctrinal Declaration & Bylaws



**“To prepare God’s people for works of service,
so that the body of Christ may be built up.”**

Ephesians 4:12

Doctrinal Declaration

Grace Community Church

PREAMBLE

Whereas, the Word of God, being our authority, demands that the children of God (followers of Jesus Christ) conform to the Word of God in doctrine and practice (Ps. 119:105; Gal. 1:6-8; 2 Tim. 4:1-5), we, the elders, on behalf of GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH, do ordain and establish the following Doctrinal Declarations.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

We are an evangelical church that is deeply committed to living out our faith in the gospel of Christ and practicing ministry in a way that fully conforms to Scripture. As a result, we have become deeply concerned about some movements within traditional evangelicalism (such as seeker sensitive, church growth, easy believism) that seem to be diminishing the church's life and leading us away from our historic beliefs and practices. We are also troubled by the idolatry of personal consumerism, the politicization of faith, as well as the acceptance of theological and moral relativism. Over the past many years these movements have led to the abandonment of the Bible as our final authority and Jesus Christ as our Lord. We not only hear of these influences; we see their effects. Therefore, in such a corrupt and distracting culture, we have committed ourselves to simple and pure devotion to Christ. It is our hope and desire that the following truths are not only declared but lived.

DOCTRINAL DECLARATIONS

- I. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God consisting of the sixty-six (66) books of both the Old and New Testaments. We believe it is verbally inspired and inerrant in the original writings and that they are the supreme and final authority in all of life. We believe God in His sovereignty has preserved His word. We believe God gives no more revelation and that the Scriptures alone are sufficient for life and godliness (Mt. 5:18; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).
- II. We believe there is only one Living and True God eternally existing in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; though different in function, they are the same in substance and equal in power and glory. (Gen. 1:26,27; Deut. 6:4; Mk. 12:29; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 1:3)
- III. We believe that God is holy and magnificent in character. We believe that all of His actions from Genesis to Revelation (creation to consummation of the ages) are for the purpose of revealing His glorious attributes. We believe that He is sovereign over the affairs of men and all of His creation, that He is omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipresent (ever-present), that He is righteous and just in both judgment (wrath) and salvation (compassion). (Gen. 1-2; Ps. 139; Is. 45:5-7; 46:10-11; Ro. 3:26; 13:1; Rev. 22:13)
- IV. We believe Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and

is true God and true man, and as such He lived a perfect and sinless life. (Lk. 1:30-35; Jn.1:1-14; 10:30; 2 Cor.5:21; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 1:1-3; 4:15)

- V. We believe that man was created in the image of God, that man sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also that spiritual death which is separation from God. We believe that all human beings are born in sin and are spiritually dead. And, apart from the Spirit's work of regeneration, they are unable to come to Him. (Gen. 1:26,27; Ps. 14:1-3; 51:5; Ro. 3:22,23; 5:6-11; Eph. 2:1-3,12)
- VI. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a substitutionary sacrifice; and that all who believe in Him are justified (forgiven and declared perfect) on the ground of His shed blood and His righteousness. (Is. 53; Jn. 3:16; Ro. 3:24-30; 5:9-10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)
- VII. We believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and His ascension into Heaven. We believe He presently ministers as High Priest, Advocate, and Mediator to those who trust in the redemptive work of His cross. (Ro. 8:34; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25; 9:24; 1 Pet. 1:3; 1 Jn. 2:1-2)
- VIII. We believe in the personal, physical, imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ to set up His kingdom upon the earth, to reign in righteousness and justice. (Zech. 14:4-11; Matt. 25:31-32; Acts 1:11; 2 Thess. 1:6-8; Jude 14-15; Rev.19:11; 20:1-6)
- IX. We believe that salvation is by grace through faith alone, and that all who repent and trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord do so because they are born of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God. We believe that repentance and obedience are outward signs of genuine saving faith. (Jn. 1:12; 3:3,5; 14:17,26; 17:3; 20:30-31; Ro. 5:1; Eph. 2:1-10; 2 Cor. 3:6)
- X. We believe there are two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are divinely commanded upon all Christians. Without merit in themselves, they serve as an expression of faith regarding the believer's identification and fellowship with Christ and His church. (Mt. 28:19-20; Lk. 22:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; 8:36-38; 18:8; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)
- XI. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting conscious punishment of the lost. (Mt. 25:46; Jn. 5:28-29; 11:25-26; Rev. 20:5-6,12-13)
- XII. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the person of the Godhead who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; that He regenerates and baptizes all believers into the Body of Christ, indwells and seals them unto the day of redemption; and that He is the Divine Teacher who guides believers into all truth. It is the desire and pleasure of believers to be filled with the Spirit. (Jn. 16:7-13; Ro. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 2:10-16; 12:12-24; Eph. 1:13-14; 5:18;

1 Jn.2:20, 27)

- XIII. We believe that the redeemed are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. It is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word and the inward work of His Spirit. (Jn. 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Ro. 8:1-11,35-39; Titus. 2:11-15; I Jn. 5:13)
- XIV. We believe that every believer is not only justified by God for heaven but set apart for His glory on earth. We believe the Holy Spirit works in the believer to conform them into the image of Jesus Christ through an increased hatred of sin, an increased love for Christ and His righteousness and a growing desire to show forth the fruit of the Spirit. (Phil. 1:6; Ro. 6:11-14; 7:14-25; 8:1-12; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:10; 1 Jn. 3:5-9)
- XV. We believe that the local church, the body and bride of Christ, is God's most precious possession. The local church is the real and visible presence of His love and grace. We believe in the continuance, the establishment and organization of local churches as taught and defined in New Testament. (Acts 13:1-4; Ro. 16:1,4; 1 Co. 3:9,16; 5:4-7; **13:1-13**; Eph. 1:22,23; 5:25-27; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus. 1:5-11; 1 Pet. 4:1-4)
- XVI. We believe that there were two kinds of gifts given the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13-14:12; Revelation 13:13-14). The only gifts in operation today are those nonrevelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6-8).
- We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today, but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).
- XVII. We believe it is the obligation of all believers to witness by life and by word to the truths of Holy Scripture and the Christ whom they proclaim. (Mk. 16: 15; Acts. 1:8; Ro. 10:14,15; **1 Co. 12:7-11**; 2 Co. 5:19-20; **Eph. 2:10**)
- XVIII. We believe that Satan is a fallen angel who is the author of sin and the cause of the fall. He is the open and declared enemy of God and man and will be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire. (Job 1:6,7; Is. 14:12-17; Mt. 4:2-11; 25:41; Rev. 20:10)

XIX. We believe God's ultimate priority for His people is to worship and enjoy Him forever. (Jn. 17:3,22-26; Phil. 3:1; 4:4; 1 Tim. 6:17; Heb. 13:15; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5)

XX. We believe that the great commission, i.e. the making of disciples, is the priority of the church. We believe the church's primary mission is to perpetuate Christ's kingdom in the hearts of people by showing and sharing His love in both deed and in truth. (Mt. 28:19-20; Jn. 13:34-35; Ro. 10:14-15)

XXI. We believe the family to be God's divine institution. Marriage itself is to be between one man and one woman. We believe God, by design, created in man a natural desire for a woman and created in woman a natural desire for a man. (Gen. 2:18-25; Ro. 1:26-27) Thus, we believe that any deviation from God's design is considered to be in direct violation of God's will as found in His word and members who are in violation will therefore, be subject to church discipline. (see Appendix A for further explanation)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS & FURTHER CLARIFICATIONS

SCRIPTURES

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as being verbally inspired by God and inerrant and infallible in the original writings, and that they are of supreme and final authority.

Terms explained:

- I. **Verbally:** This means that the individual words of the Bible are true and without error in the original writings. Therefore, more than just the thought or concept is inspired, but also every word (Mt. 5:17-18; Prov. 30:5-6). The term "plenary" is often used with the word "verbal" to give the view that all Scripture is fully and equally inspired (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- II. **Inspired (Inspiration):** Inspiration is that particular work of God by which the Holy Spirit, being the author of Scripture, supernaturally moved and superintended the writers of Scripture and without excluding their human intelligence, individuality, literary style, personal feelings, or any other human factor, God's own complete and coherent message to men was recorded in perfect accuracy and the very words of the Bible bear the authority of this divine authorship. Inspiration is not equivalent to dictation except in certain instances, as God uses the experience, feelings and thinking of the human author. The end result, however, is just as accurate as if God Himself had taken the pen. Hence, the Scriptures were inspired or breathed out by God and, though the authors were fallible men, what they wrote was without error (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Inspiration does not suppress the intellectual ability and talent but rather uses that intellectual ability and talent (Luke 1:1-3; 2 Sam. 23:2).

- III. **Inerrant:** Inerrant means that the Scriptures in their original writings were without error (Jn. 10:35; Lk. 16:17).
- IV. **Infallible:** Infallible means that the Scriptures in their original writings were incapable of error and never wrong (Jn. 10:35; Lk. 16:17).
- V. **Final Authority:** The Scriptures are God's special revelation (communication of truth) to man and because they are inspired and inerrant they are our final authority. However, we take careful note of what the Bible indicates as not being authoritative, such as Satan's statement to Eve in the Garden of Eden, "You surely shall not die." (Gen. 3:45; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

TRINITY

We believe in one God eternally existing in one essence, yet three co-equal persons, the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Terms explained:

- I. **Eternally existing:** There is but one God (Deut. 6:4; Is. 45:5-6,14,18,21-22; Mk. 12:29-32), Who has no beginning and no ending (Ps. 90:1-2; Gen. 1:1).
- II. **Three in One:** God is one in essence, yet three persons, co-equal, eternally existing (Mt. 28:19; Eph. 4:4-6; Rev. 1:4; Jn. 12:26; 15:26; 16:15; 1 Pet. 1:2; Acts 2:32-36; 1 Cor. 12:3-6, 2 Cor. 13:14).
- III. **Co-equal:**
 - A. The Bible tells us that the Father is God (Jn. 6:27; Ro. 1:7).
 - B. The Son is recognized as God (Jn. 1:1; 20:28; Heb. 1:8; 1 Jn. 5:19-20; Phil. 2:6).
 - C. The Holy Spirit is also identified as God (Mt. 28:19; Acts 5:4,9).

INCARNATION

We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born to the virgin Mary.

Terms explained:

- I. **Jesus Christ:** Jesus Christ had two natures in one person, so that He was simultaneously fully God and fully man, and this relationship was such that there was no dividing of person nor confusion between the two natures. (Jn. 1:1-14).

- II. **Conceived by the Holy Spirit:** The conception of Jesus was a divine act of God, without human agency (Mt. 1:18; Lk. 1:26-38).
- III. **Born to the virgin Mary:** At the time of Christ's conception and birth, Mary was a virgin (Mt. 1:18-25; Isa. 7:14; Lk. 1:27).

RESURRECTION, ASCENSION, EXALTATION

We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, His ascension into Heaven and His present life there as High Priest and Advocate for us.

Terms Explained:

- I. **Resurrection:** We believe that after three days, Jesus Christ arose bodily from the grave (Lk. 24:23-40). The doctrine of the resurrection is essential to salvation (Ro. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:12 23,35-37).
- II. **Ascension:** After His resurrection and forty-day ministry Jesus ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:1-11; 1 Peter 3:22).
- III. **High Priest and Advocate:** Since Christ's atonement has restored our relationship with God, we now can approach God through Christ, Who as our High Priest represents us before God. As our Advocate, He compassionately deals with our needs and strengthens us (Jn. 14:18; Heb. 4:14; 5:1-10; 13:5; 7:25; 8:1-2; 9:11-15,24).

HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, Who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. **He equips and sanctifies the believer.** He is the life of the believer, and He empowers the preaching and teaching of the gospel.

Terms Explained:

- I. **Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, equal with the Father and the Son (Jn. 14:16; Mt. 28:19).
- II. **Convicts:** Jesus Christ said that the Spirit would perform this ministry with respect to the world (Jn. 16:7-11).
- III. **Life:** The Holy Spirit is the agent of spiritual birth (Jn. 3:5-8). The Spirit regenerates, indwells, seals, and baptizes all believers into the body of Christ, also known as the church (1 Cor. 12:13; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 1 Cor. 6:19; Ro. 8:9,11; 2 Cor. 1:21,22). The believer's life is strengthened and guided by the Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 3:16; Jn. 16:13; Ro. 8:4,14,26-27). The believer is commanded to be filled or controlled by the Spirit, so

that the characteristics of Christ likeness will be evident in a powerful life (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16).

- IV. **Sanctifies:** Once the Holy Spirit indwells the believer He begins the work of sanctification. Whereas justification is an act of God on behalf of the sinner, sanctification is the cooperative work whereby the believer is actively involved in being conformed into the image of the Savior. It is the life-long process of learning and doing what pleases his Lord. It is the process of taking what God has given and diligently applying it for His glory. This includes being in God's Word, putting off the old life and replacing it with the new life in Christ, exercising spiritual gifts and serving one another. (Psalm 119:9-11; Ro. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:4-7; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:17-24; 2 Pet. 1:3-11; 1 Jn. 3:1-3)
- V. **Empowers:** The Holy Spirit enables the spreading of God's word in testimony, preaching and practical living (Jn. 15:26-27). Spiritual obedience will give fruit to a spiritually powerful life of service for Christ (Eph. 5:15-21; Gal. 5:22-25).

MANKIND

We believe that mankind was created in the image of God, sinned, and thereby incurred not only physical death, but spiritual death, which is separation from God, and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature.

Terms explained:

- I. Created in the image of God: Man is created in the image of God in the sense that he was created to fellowship with God and reflect His rule and care over the rest of creation. (Gen. 1:26-28; 5:1; 1 Cor. 11:7).
- II. Separation from God: This happened when Adam and Eve (representatives of mankind), of their own free will, chose to disobey God by eating from the tree God commanded them not to eat. This original sin separated us from God, Who, because of His holiness, could not tolerate sin, and therefore, judged such sin and cast Adam and Eve out of the garden (Gen. 3:1-19; Ro. 6:23; 3:10; 8:7; Gal. 3:22).

ATONEMENT

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the basis of His shed blood.

Terms Explained:

- I. **Atonement:** Christ paying the penalty or the price (death) for our sins. (Ro. 6:23; Heb. 9:23-28).
- II. **Representative:** This means that Jesus Christ stood in our place, was treated as if He was a sinner though He never sinned (2 Cor. 5:14-21).
- III. **Substitutionary:** This is called the "vicarious" suffering since Christ died in our place. He did not die because of His own sin (Heb. 4:15 16; 1 Jn. 3:5), but died to pay for the sins of others (Mk. 10:45; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Ro. 5:8; 1 Pet. 3:18)
- IV. **All Who Believe:** The gift of salvation provided by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is offered to all mankind (Ro. 1:13; 1 Jn. 2:2), yet only applied to those who exhibit faith in Christ and are therefore justified (Gal. 2:16; 3:11).
- V. **Justified:** Justification is that act of God whereby He declares the guilty and depraved sinner to be righteous because of God's own righteousness having been imputed, or credited to the sinner (Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15; Ro. 3:23-26; 4:5-8,25; 5:18; 8:33).

SALVATION

We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born again by the Holy Spirit, and thereby become children of God and heirs of eternal life.

Terms explained:

- I. **Faith:** Faith is the "gift of God" (Eph. 2:8) and is produced by the Word of God (Rom. 10:14,17). We are saved by faith alone apart from works (Eph. 2:9; Ro. 3:20; Titus 3:5). However, genuine faith necessarily leads to good works (Eph. 2:10; Mt. 5:16; Jam. 2:17-26).
- II. **Born again by the Holy Spirit:** The new birth (regeneration) is absolutely necessary for fellowship with God (Jn. 3:7). Man is totally passive in regeneration since it is completely a work of God (Jn. 1:13; 3:6). The new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:8) by which He creates within a person a new nature, a new heart, a new spirit (Jn. 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:4; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; 2 Cor. 5:17).
- III. **Children of God:** Those who have received the Spirit of Christ have therefore been born again into God's family (Jn. 1:1-12; Ro. 8:9,14-17). As members of His family we not only have fellowship with our Father in Heaven, but we are being transformed by the Holy Spirit into the image of Christ, and when Christ returns we will be completely changed in body and spirit to be like Jesus Christ (Ro. 8:19-23; 1 Jn. 3:2). This experience of the life

of Jesus Christ within us now by the presence of the Holy Spirit and forever ours in the presence of Jesus Christ is "eternal life".

- IV. **Justification, Sanctification, Glorification:** Justification is an act of God whereby He declares the sinner just (righteous) before Him. Sanctification is the lifelong process whereby the Holy Spirit teaches the child of God to follow Christ. Glorification is the work of God whereby He finishes/completes the work by bringing His child home to be with Him.

CHURCH

We believe in the Church, i.e. the body of Christ, whose mission is to preach the Scriptures to all the world, all of its endeavors being guided by multiple leadership and supported by the wise stewardship of God's people.

Terms explained:

- I. **Body of Christ:** The collective body of believers in Jesus Christ is called the church. Though used to describe the universal church (the redeemed from all time) it usually describes a local group of believers who gather for worship and fellowship. (Eph. 5:23-32; Col. 1:18; Mat. 18:20; Eph. 1:22-23, Col. 2:19; 3:15).
- II. **Mission:** The Church is to make committed followers of Jesus Christ. Mt. 28:18-20; Ro. 15:6; Eph. 1:15-23.
- III. **Preach:** By this term we encompass all of the believers who are to declare and make known God's truth through the totality of their lives, in addition to the formal proclamation of the Word of God (Eph. 3:8-10; 4:15,16; Col. 1:10-28).
- IV. **Multiple leadership:** Within each local church we believe God provides a team of elders, also known as pastors/overseers to guide, lead and enable the congregation to develop spiritual maturity. They are also known as shepherds, who are responsible to feed the congregation the word of God for spiritual growth and service. Elders are appointed to exercise spiritual oversight for the flock entrusted to them. We believe the functions of elders or bishop/overseers to be identical, and that the term "elder" refers mainly to the person, while "bishop" or "overseer" refers to what an elder does. Deacons serve as helpers, or ministering workers who fulfill various formal or informal roles within the congregation (Acts 14:23; 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 8-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)
- V. **Stewardship:** As members of God's family we recognize the obligation under which God places us to exercise care and concern with regard to all time, possessions, wealth and persons as may be entrusted to us. One mark of the spiritually wise person is the

mature choices made with respect to these areas (Mt. 20:8; Gal. 4:2; Lk. 16:2,3; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 9:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25).

A. **Tithe:** We believe the guideline of ten per cent to be highly appropriate, yet we recognize the individual believer as free from compulsion or formal requirements in stewardship matters or church support (Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21-29; Deut. 12:5-7,17-18; 14:22-29; 26:12; Gen. 14:17-24; Lk. 11:42; Mt. 23:23f; 2 Cor. 9:6-8; Heb. 7:10).

B. **Offerings:** We believe that offerings consist of any gift, whether money, time or effort, that is freely given in response to the direction of God's Spirit (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:24-9:15).

ORDINANCES

We believe that the ordinances of the Church given by our Lord, are Baptism and the Lord's table (Communion).

Terms explained:

- I. **Baptism:** water baptism is commanded of all believers and it is an act of obedience signifying the believer's trust in death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3,4; Acts 18:8). The disciples were commanded to see to it that water baptism was a part of their ministry (Mt. 28:19,20; 16:16) and the pattern of the book of Acts (Acts 2:38-41; 8:12,13,36,38) indicates the widespread practice of water baptism for believers. This church does not believe in baptismal regeneration, nor do we hold that baptism is necessary for salvation.
- II. **Lord's Table (Communion):** On the night of His arrest, Jesus instituted what is known as the Eucharist, or Communion service, which symbolizes and calls our attention to the atonement. This celebration is one in which we look back to the finished work of Christ and also forward to the yet to be completed consummation of our redemption (Mt. 26:26-30; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-30).

ESCHATOLOGY

We believe in the blessed hope, the personal, visible and imminent return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Terms Explained:

- I. **Blessed Hope:** The return of the Lord is an event that believers ought to wait for with high expectation and excitement. As still imperfect people, we eagerly await the

restoration of all things to perfect Christ-likeness after the return of Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:1-3; Titus. 2:13; Ro. 8:18-25; 1 Pet. 1:7,13; 4:13; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:7).

- II. **Personal, visible:** Jesus, not just in spirit, but in bodily form, will return to this earth (Acts 1:11).
- III. **Imminent:** The Church, as God's steward, ought to consider the return of Christ as an event which is about to happen, and therefore, though patient, we are to be alert to such an event as we seek to glorify Him through our lives (Mat. 24:22,24,29-51; Lk. 21:34).
- IV. **Patient Lifestyle:** The Bible's teaching concerning the Lord's impending return is always set in the context of practical exhortation, focusing upon our present lifestyle, rather than upon undue speculation (2 Pet. 3:11; Mt. 24:42-51).

HEAVEN AND HELL

We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost in hell, and the fellowship of the saved in heaven.

Terms explained:

- I. **Bodily resurrection:** Those saints who are "asleep in Jesus" will be raised at the same time the living saints are "raptured" and changed (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-58). After the Millennial reign of Christ, all the unsaved will stand before the Great White Throne for judgment, and since their names will not be found in the Book of Life, they will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 20:11-15; 21:8,27; Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Acts 13:48).
- II. **Everlasting conscious suffering:** Lk. 16:19-31; Mt. 25:30; 24:51; Heb. 12:23; Phil. 1:23
- III. **Heaven:** We believe heaven to be a literal place where Jesus Christ is preparing an eternal home for believers of all generations (Jn. 14:1-6; Heb. 1:5-9; Rev. 19:1-8).
- IV. **Hell:** We believe hell to be a literal place where all unsaved will spend eternity (Rev. 20:15; Mt. 13:36-43).

DEVIL

We believe in the existence of a real and personal devil (also known as Satan), who is still working in the world to destroy the souls of men and that he, all his angels, and all who do not receive Christ as their Savior will be eternally punished in the lake of fire.

Terms explained:

- I. **Devil:** Though a created being and one of the highest angels, the devil fell because he wanted to be greater than God (Isa. 14:12-15).
- II. **Eternally perish:** The judgment upon the devil and his followers is an unending punishment (Rev. 20:10,14-15; 19:20).

APPENDIX A

GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND SEXUALITY

We believe the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen 2:18-25). Grace Community Church will only conduct a marriage ceremony and recognize the marriage between a biological man and a biological woman.

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Mt. 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Ro. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mk. 12:28-31; Lk. 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated.

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Grace Community Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to Grace Community Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Grace Community in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by the Scriptures and the doctrines of Grace Community Church.

BYLAWS

Grace Community Church

PREAMBLE

Whereas, the Word of God demands that a Christian organization not only conform to the Word of God in doctrine and practice (Ps. 119:105; Gal. 1:6-8; 2 Tim. 4:1-5), but that all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40) we, the elders of Grace Community Church, hereby set forth and establish the following BYLAWS by which our congregational affairs, spiritual and material, will be conducted.

ARTICLE I

Name:

The name of this church will be "GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH". The word "church" as used in these bylaws will refer to Grace Community Church, whereas the word "Church" will refer to the Body and Bride of Christ.

ARTICLE II

Purpose:

The purpose of this church is to glorify God. It will seek to attain this end through the public worship of God, the preaching of the Scriptures, consistent Christian living by its members, discipleship, personal evangelism and missionary endeavor (Eph. 1:5-14; Col. 1:9-10; Mt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:9-12).

Authority:

The Board of Elders is the governing body of this church.

Incorporation:

To implement this purpose legally, the church is incorporated under the laws of the State of North Carolina, so that it may own, provide and/or maintain a place of worship (including suitable real estate and buildings), receive, hold and disburse gifts, bequests and funds, and/or do all sundry things necessary to carry on such purpose.

ARTICLE III

Membership:

Anyone may become a member at Grace Community who 1) professes saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and 2) shows a willingness to abide by our Doctrinal Declarations and Bylaws and 3) is approved by the elders.

I. Responsibilities of membership: The responsibilities of church membership are summarized as follows:

- A. To walk together in Christian love;
- B. To exercise Christian care and watchfulness over one another;
- C. To pray with and for one another, sharing our burdens, sorrows, and joys;
- D. To be thoughtful and courteous to one another, to be slow to take offense, and to be quick to forgive and to seek forgiveness;

- E. To guard the spiritual and Scriptural purity and peace of the Church, and to promote its usefulness as a witness to the saving grace of God and Christ Jesus His Son;
- F. To assist, through the gifts of the Spirit, in the work of the Church and to promote its usefulness as a witness to the saving grace of God and Christ Jesus;
- G. To contribute, as the Lord directs, to the financial support of the Church, the relief of the needy, and evangelism of all people;
- H. To engage regularly in personal Bible reading and prayer, and to establish family devotions where possible;
- I. To bring up such children as may be entrusted to our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;
- J. To be above reproach in the world, to be honest in the sight of all men, to be faithful in engagements, exemplary in conduct, denying ungodliness and worldly lust;
- K. To endeavor to share our faith in Christ with others;
- L. To purpose that when we remove ourselves from this place, we will as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the responsibilities of being a part of the body of Christ.

II. Discipline of Members: the motive of church discipline is love, the spirit in which it is carried out is humility and the purpose of church discipline is to effect a return to a Biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs (Gal. 6:1), to maintain purity in the local church (1 Cor. 5:6) and to deter sin (1 Tim.5:20).

Any member of this church who teaches or insists on holding false doctrine, and persistently conducts himself or herself in a manner inconsistent with Biblical teaching, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church will be dealt with as follows, according to Mat. 18:15-18:

- A. It is the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of an erring member's false doctrine or misconduct to warn and correct the erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
- B. If the erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member will again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two elders as witnesses to warn and correct, seeking repentance and restoration.
- C. If the erring member still refuses to heed the warning, the matter will be brought to the attention of the elders, who, upon careful and prayerful investigation, will tell it to the church encouraging the congregation to pray for repentance and restoration of the erring member.

- D. If the erring member refuses to heed the warnings of the elders and the church, he or she will be dismissed from the church pursuant to the Scriptures and treated as an unbeliever. There will be no appeal of the discipline process or the dismissal to any ecclesiastical or civil court. The congregation will be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring member.

Unless the erring member repents, it is clearly understood that the discipline process will continue to conclusion whether the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership.

III. Removal of Membership: Membership may be removed in one of four ways:

- A. By physical death.
- B. By transfer: When it is requested, the elders may grant to a departing member in good standing, a letter of transfer to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church which is in their judgment disloyal to the gospel (Jude 3).
- C. By exclusion: If a member habitually absents himself from the stated meetings of the church without valid reason, or if due to relocation he ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he may be removed from membership. If a removed member applies again for membership, the church will follow the process set forth by the elders.
- D. By dismissal as a final step of church discipline. The Board of Elders will only apply the above-mentioned dismissal (see II.D) in strict accordance with the Scriptures.

ARTICLE IV

Qualifications of church leaders:

All persons who hold any position of leadership (a position deemed necessary by the elders) must meet and maintain the following spiritual qualifications for leadership:

- I. Has demonstrated a repentant attitude towards their own sin and accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord.
- II. Is a member of Grace Community Church. (Non-members may be invited to teach on a temporary basis; special speakers, guests, etc.).
- III. Teaches no doctrine contrary to the Holy Scriptures or as outlined in the "Doctrinal Declarations" of Grace Community Church.
- IV. Provides systematic spiritual, financial, and physical support to Grace Community Church ministry.

- V. Is known for a dedicated Christian life according to the standards of God's Word, and will purpose to put any sin, including doubtful conduct and conversation, out of his/her life so that the resulting influence is helpful rather than a hindrance.

ARTICLE V

Pastor/Teacher, Elders and Pastoral Staff:

God has provided various forms of leadership for His Church. At Grace Community Church we recognize and seek to channel this leadership focus through a variety of positions including pastor(s), elders, and staff. Those who serve and minister in these roles shall collectively and individually oversee, provide for, and encourage the spiritual life, welfare, and total ministry of the congregation in order to ensure the proper equipping of the saints.

As God's servants and stewards, these leaders will be persons:

- Who meet the Scriptural qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:19-25; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:3-6);
- Who adhere to the doctrinal basis of this church;
- Whose character and ability to serve has been examined and approved by the elders;
- Who will therefore be respected as they carry out their duties (Heb. 13:17).

I. Duties of Pastor/Teacher: As an elder of this church the Senior Pastor will:

- A. Give himself to prayer and the study of the Word of God;
- B. Preach and expound the Word of God;
- C. Administer the Ordinances in accordance with the Word of God;
- D. Share in the pastoral care of the congregation along with the other elders and members of the pastoral staff;
- E. Perform the marriage ceremonies at his discretion in accordance with the laws of God;
- F. Officiate at funerals of members of the church and non-members at his discretion;
- G. Together with the other elders maintain church discipline;
- H. Participate in the installation of newly designated elders;
- I. Perform other Scriptural and general pastoral duties.

The Pastor/Teacher will be free to accept invitations to preach the Word of God to other groups or organizations, provided such engagements do not interfere with the work of the church. Before accepting invitations to speak for other groups which require his absence from the church and its activities, the Pastor/Teacher will consult with the Board of Elders and obtain its permission.

II. Duties of Elders:

- A. To be devoted to prayer and the study of God's Word and sustain a caring ministry for the flock, which involves:
 - 1. Serving as partners with the Pastor(s) for the church's spiritual growth;
 - 2. Praying for the sick and visiting the congregation;
- B. To teach and exhort as well as refute those who contradict the truth, which involves:
 - 1. Ensuring that instructors, Bible study leaders and youth leaders are properly qualified;
 - 2. Arranging for pulpit supply during the Pastor/Teacher's absence.
- C. To lead by Christ-like example, which involves:
 - 1. Consistently modeling spiritual character, attitudes, values, and behavior among the congregation;
 - 2. Providing and inviting the opportunity for frequent and on-going contact with members of the congregation;
 - 3. Conducting the affairs of the church in an atmosphere of openness and mutual sensitivity, focusing as much on nurturing one another as on decision-making.
- D. To oversee the affairs of the church, which involves:
 - 1. Being responsible for the employment, terms of employment, direction, and termination of employment of pastoral staff;
 - 2. Installing the duly elected Pastor and/or Pastors;
 - 3. Approving all subordinate organizations of the church;
 - 4. Approving all applicants for church membership;
 - 5. Maintaining the legal status of the church;
 - 6. Being responsible for securing funds necessary to meet the current expenses of the church;
 - 7. Conducting the Annual and special business meetings of the church;
 - 8. Submitting the approved budget to the congregation at the Annual Business Meeting of the church;

9. Approving nominations for the Board of Elders for the Annual Business Meeting of the church.
10. Communicating to the congregation on a regular basis concerning the activities and concerns of the elders.
11. To perform other Scriptural and general duties of oversight.

III. **Duties of Pastoral Staff:** To perform such duties as are outlined by the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE VI

Nomination and Selection of Pastor/Teacher, Pastoral Staff and Elders

The Pastor/Teacher and Pastoral Staff

When a pastoral position becomes vacant, it will be the duty of the Board of Elders to provide for the vacant position and (if necessary) provide for a pulpit ad interim. They will seek a man who meets the requirements of 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 along with all other requirements set forth in these articles. In carrying out this process, the Board of Elders will directly, or through a search committee, communicate to the congregation regularly, and at reasonable intervals. We encourage that all church members who desire to suggest the name of an individual for a pastoral position do so in writing to the secretary of the Board of Elders. The filling of a pastoral position will be as follows:

- A. The Board of Elders will search out and screen all candidates, keeping the congregation informed of its progress.
- B. Unanimous consent of the elders is needed to invite a candidate for “in person” contact with the elders, deacons and the congregation.
- C. When the conditions in steps A and B have been met, voting members of Grace Community Church, at a properly called Membership meeting, will be asked to affirm the candidate.
- D. Unanimous approval from the elders is required to call a candidate to any position of Pastor.

The Elders

There will be no set number of elders. Each elder will hold office as long as he is faithful to his calling and has the confidence of his brethren and the congregation. An elder, like pastors, must meet the requirements of 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

The initial selection of elders will be based upon appointment by the Pastor/Teacher (Titus 1:5). After the initial selection the process for selecting elders will be as follows:

- A. The elders will be personally involved in making disciples. Within the context of making disciples a group of men will be selected by the elders for further development as potential future elders.

- B. The elders may at any time during the year present a candidate or candidates for the possibility of being ordained an elder. In no case should a man be presented as a candidate without his knowledge and prior consent. The presentation of a potential elder/elders will occur at least six months before they are presented as a candidate. During these six months' questions from the members of the congregation concerning the candidate should be addressed directly to the elders in private no later than one month prior to his presentation as a candidate.

- C. At a special worship service, the current elders will present the candidate for elder to the congregation for public ordination and installation.

The elders will appoint a chairman and secretary from its members. The chairman of the Board of Elders will preside over the meetings of the elders, the annual meeting or any special congregational meeting.

An elder may resign his office without prejudice if for good and valid reasons he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties required.

In recognition that the task of eldership is significant and is accomplished while continuing care of family and work responsibilities, we understand that individual elders may need to take leave of some of the responsibilities of eldership for periods of time. Such sabbatical times will be arranged through mutual consent of the elders.

Mutual accountability among the elders safeguards against the continuation in office of an elder who has rendered himself unqualified for future participation.

ARTICLE VII

Termination of Pastor/Teacher, Pastoral Staff and Elders

The Pastor/Teacher, an elder or any Pastoral staff will be removed by a unanimous vote of the elders. When any pastor resigns to accept another call, or for reasons of his own choosing, he should give the Board of Elders a 1-month notice in writing of his intention to do so.

ARTICLE VIII

Deacons

The Role of Deacon

The role of a deacon is to serve the Church by assisting the elders. The authority and responsibility of the deacons will be set forth in guidelines established by the elders.

The Selection of Deacon

The need for deacons will be determined by the elders. Candidates for deacon will be submitted by the church body to the elders. The elders will examine their character and abilities according to 1 Tim. 3:8-13. Upon the approval of the elders, a candidate will be presented to the congregation for ordination.

The Term of Deacon

A deacon will serve for as long as he/she is able to perform the tasks assigned to them. A deacon will be dismissed in accordance with the same procedure as used for elders (see Article VII).

ARTICLE IX

Property and Assets:

- I. The church will have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and so hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of North Carolina and is deemed necessary for the functioning of the church, and will have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, bill of sale, deed, or otherwise. All property will be held in the name of the church.
- II. In case of division of the church caused by conflict (from which we pray God by His mercy to preserve us), all property and assets of the church will belong to those who abide by its bylaws.
- III. In case of dissolution of the church organization, the property and all assets will be sold, either through private or public sale. From the proceeds, firstly all current and long term obligations of the church will be paid. Secondly, all remaining funds will be directed to one or more Christian organizations qualified under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, for the benefit of the church's supported missionaries and/or such other Christian endeavors as the elders will determine. The church will be considered dissolved if so decided by the elders.
- IV. Any sale or other disposition of the main Grace Community Church facility will be approved by majority vote of voting members of the Congregation. All other real estate transactions will be approved by majority vote of the elders.

ARTICLE X

BUSINESS MEETINGS:

There will be two types of business meetings of the church: The Annual Business Meeting and special business meetings.

- I. The Annual Business Meeting will be held during the month of January. The Board of Elders will be responsible for the selection of the date on which the Annual Business Meeting will be held. Written notification to each church member will be mailed at least one month prior to the meeting. The notice of the Annual Business Meeting will include an agenda of matters to be discussed and/or presented. All reports required by the Board of Elders for the annual business meeting must be written and submitted to the secretary of the Board of Elders by the first Monday in January. These reports will include but not be limited to a current financial statement and recommendations and comments as to past, present, and future matters relating to the congregation. Matters of church discipline will not be included within the annual reports.

- II. Special business meetings may be called by the Board of Elders. Notice of a special business meeting will be mailed to each church member at least ten business days in advance of the special business meeting, except that no mailing will be required to those members who will have picked up their written notices at Grace Community at least ten business days in advance of the meeting. This notice will include the agenda of the business to be conducted or considered at said business meeting. In the event that a condition or situation arises which is deemed an emergency by the Board of Elders, the advance notice regulation may be waived.

ARTICLE XI

Amendments:

Amendments to the Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation or Doctrinal Declaration of Grace Community Church may be amended by a unanimous vote of the elders.

ARTICLE XII

Raising Funds:

It will not be the policy of this church to promote suppers, parties, or engage in the sale of products and/or services for the purpose of raising funds. Any exception to this general policy must have the prior approval of the elders.

ARTICLE XIII

Indemnification:

Grace Community Church will indemnify and hold harmless any and all officers, directors, elders, ministers, pastors, deacons and business administrators for any expenses actually and necessarily incurred in connection with any action, suit or proceeding against said officers, directors, elders, ministers, pastors, deacons and business administrators. This indemnification will include costs for attorney fees. The indemnification will occur as the expenses are incurred and in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit or proceeding, on receipt of the officers, directors, elders, ministers, pastors, deacons or business administrators' promise: (1) to repay the amount advanced if it proved by clear and convincing evidence in court that the officers', directors', elders', ministers', pastors', deacons', and business administrators' conduct involved a deliberate intent to injure the corporation's best interests, (2) to reasonably cooperate with the corporation in connection with the action, suit or proceeding.

This indemnification will be available to any officer, director, elder, minister, pastor, deacons and/or business administrator which is made or thereafter to be made a part to any action, suit or proceeding because of the person's relationship with the corporation. Persons who are officers, directors, elders, ministers, pastors, deacons and/or business administrators at the time of being made a party, or threatened with being made a party to any action, suit or proceeding, or were officers, directors, elders, ministers, pastors, deacons and/or business administrators will be allowed indemnification. Indemnification will also be available in criminal actions only if it is found that the officer, director, elder, minister, pastor, deacons or business administrator had no reasonable cause to believe that the subject acts were unlawful.

ARTICLE XIV

Effectual Power of the Bylaws:

The Bylaws will take effect immediately upon its ratification by a unanimous vote of the elders.

ARTICLE XV

Confidentiality of Church Records:

No member will have the right to inspect the church records as to (i) the disciplining of any member, (ii) the hiring or firing of any employee, (iii) the need or problems of any member or employee, (iv) the financial contributions of any member, or (v) any other records which the Board of Elders may determine to be in the best interests of the church to keep confidential.