

# **Grace Life Bible Church Constitution**

(Updated 8/16)

## **Preamble**

We being the church the Body of Christ, “the pillar and ground of the truth,” declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the doctrines of the one faith (Eph. 4:5) and to govern this body of believers in an orderly manner. Being subject to the legitimate powers of our society (Rom. 13:1-7), and consistent with the principles of grace, we ascribe to God’s Word its rightful place of authority over our local congregation.

## **Article I: Establishment**

### **Section 1: IDENTITY**

#### *Clause A: Name*

The name of this assembly of believers, first meeting on October 27, 2007, shall be Grace Life Bible Church (GLBC), a Michigan not-for-profit corporation officially recognized and registered on December 3, 2007.

#### *Clause B: Heritage*

Grace Life Bible Church is indebted to the spiritual legacy of the West Side Grace Church in Muskegon Heights, MI. Founded in the 1940’s, West Side Grace Church stood alone as a witness to both the Gospel of the Grace of God, as well as rightly dividing the Word of truth for many decades. Former saints from the West Side Grace Church were joined by fellow believers from a bible study that had been meeting in Cedar Springs, MI from September 2004 through December 2006 in the establishment of GLBC. As a result, our combined adherence to the doctrines of grace revealed to the Apostle Paul for the current Dispensation of Grace establishes a direct historical tie to its early proclamation in West Michigan.

#### *Clause C: Affiliations*

As an independent, self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating local body of believers, we maintain no organizational affiliations with any other groups, although we gladly fellowship with others of like precious faith.

### **Section 2: PURPOSE**

The purpose of GLBC shall be to carry out fully and faithfully, according to the effectual working of God’s Word, the purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ; to make all men see the fellowship of the

mystery (Eph. 3:9). Our purpose as a visible, localized manifestation of the Body of Christ is to glorify God by promoting “the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery” committed to the Apostle Paul (Rom. 16:25, Eph. 3:1-9) and carrying out “the ministry of reconciliation” committed to our trust as Ambassadors of Christ (II Cor. 5:18-20, II Tim. 1:13-14). To this end and following the ministry strategy of the Apostle Paul (Acts 14:21-23) we have established three Biblical priorities for our ministry:

*Clause A: Evangelism*

The proclamation of the gospel of grace to non-believers: resulting in their conversion to Jesus Christ and participation in a local body of believers.

*Clause B: Edification*

The equipping of believers with sound doctrine so that they experience genuine spiritual growth, which results in doctrinal unity, personal integrity and corporate harmony.

*Clause C: Expansion*

The sending and supporting of spiritually mature and properly trained workers into every community and culture of the world resulting in planting grace churches in every ethnic grouping.

**Section 3: AUTHORITY**

The authority for the formation of local churches comes directly from the Word of God (Acts 14:21-23, 27, Rom. 16:16, I Cor. 11:17-18, Gal. 1:2, Phil. 1:1, I Tim. 3, Titus 3, etc.). The written Word of God is the foundation of our faith and practice. Nothing in these articles shall be interpreted so as to contradict or superimpose itself upon the ultimate authority of God’s rightly divided Word, as contained in the Authorized King James Version of the holy Scriptures (II Tim. 3:16-17; 2:15).

**Article II: Membership**

**Section 1: MEMBERSHIP IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**

The most important affiliation during the dispensation of grace is membership in the Body of Christ; conferred instantaneously by the Holy Spirit upon belief of the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24, I Corinthians 12:13). While membership in the Body of Christ is paramount, the scriptural pattern for a believer’s life is to voluntarily join with other like-minded saints in a local church for the work of ministry.

## Section 2: FORMAL MEMBERSHIP

For the reasons stated in the previous section, GLBC shall not have a formal membership process. All saints who agree with the Statement of Faith of Grace Life Bible Church and choose to identify themselves with GLBC for the purposes of worship, fellowship, and laboring together in the work of the ministry shall be considered members.

### **Article III: Governance and Operational Guidelines**

## Section 1: THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

We recognize that the Head of the Church, the Body of Christ, is the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22-23, 4:15, Col. 1:18) and that He speaks to His Church through the Holy Scriptures, the infallible, authoritative and objective guide of the Church in matters of faith, order and practice (II Tim. 3:16-17). We further recognize that our Lord's Headship is exercised in practical terms through faith-obedience to His written Word.

## Section 2: PAULINE MODEL

Deriving its meaning from the Greek word *presbuteros* meaning "older," "more mature," or "wiser," the Presbyterian Model of church governance asserts that a board of elders holds final authority in the administration of church affairs. In seeking to follow the pattern that the Apostle Paul established for the Body of Christ in the Pastoral Epistles, it is evident that elders are to be appointed to bring order to a local church, teach and protect the doctrines of grace, and care for the saints under their charge.

Consequently, the governance of GLBC shall be vested in its Board of Elders. Based on the understanding; that the responsibility for the spiritual life of a church falls upon its Elders, all decisions regarding GLBC shall be made through deliberations of its Board of Elders and not congregational vote. The fact that all decision-making authority for GLBC is vested in the Board of Elders (except to the extent that the Board delegates authority to the Bishop), shall not eliminate the Board's obligations (1) to give due consideration to the views of all members, (2) to make all decisions on the basis of the scriptures, and (3) to inform the membership in a timely manner of all significant Board decisions. Therefore, the operation of our church will be overseen by the office of Elder (I Tim. 3:1-17), assisted by the office of Deacon (I Tim. 3:8-13).

*"For purposes of this document the word "Board" will refer to "Board of Elders".*

## Section 3: BOARD OF ELDERS

### *Clause A: Qualifications of Elders*

A man must meet the following qualifications to be considered for election as an Elder:  
(1) male of at least 21 years of age, (2) active membership in GLBC as defined in Article II Section II, and (3) satisfaction of the standards of I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

*Clause B: Selection of Elders*

The Board of Elders shall be self-perpetuating. At any time, the Board, by majority vote, may appoint a man who meets the foregoing requirements to be an Elder. There shall be no limit as to the number of men who may be appointed to the Board. At the October board meeting of each year (in recognition of GLBC's official establishment in October 2007), the Board shall consider whether to add any additional Elders to the Board.

*Clause C: Term of Office*

An Elder shall serve indefinitely until the earlier of (1) his resignation or (2) his removal by a majority vote of the Board. The Board shall consider the removal of any Elder who has not actively participated in the life of GLBC for a six month period.

*Clause D: Responsibilities of the Board of Elders*

The Board of Elders is charged with the general oversight of the congregation and direction of the affairs of the church as its Board of Directors. They are to work together to develop, implement, guide, and oversee the work of the church—its objective, strategy, philosophy, and activities.

Their responsibilities include (but are not limited to) providing examples of personal godliness (I Tim. 3), developing vision and direction for the ministry (II Tim. 3:10, I Thess. 5:12), ensuring orderly functioning of the assembly (Titus 1:5, Col. 2:5), devoting themselves to prayer, study and teaching of the Word (I Tim. 3:2, 4:12-16, 5:17), maintaining the doctrinal integrity of our fellowship and guarding it from false teaching (Acts 20:28-30, Titus 1:9-11), admonishing with love those who are disobedient to Scripture and disciplining those who are unresponsive (II Tim. 2:24-26, I Cor. 5, Titus 3).

*Clause E: Organization of Board of Elders*

The Board of Elders shall select a chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer, and a secretary, who shall serve at the Board's pleasure. Only Elders may serve in these capacities.

The chairman shall (1) preside over all meetings of the Board of Elders, (2) act as the spokesman for the Board of Elders, and (3) set the strategic goals for GLBC along with the bishop and the consent of the rest of the Board

.

The treasurer shall be responsible for all financial matters and shall report to the Board of Elders, no less than bi-monthly, all material financial matters.

The secretary shall keep the minutes of all Board of Elders meetings and maintain all GLBC records.

*Clause F: Accountability and Discipline of Elders*

In order to meet their responsibilities and provide godly leadership for the church, Elders are charged to humbly examine themselves, the Scriptures, and every aspect of the issues and facts brought before them in their deliberations.

Discipline of Elders will follow the pattern given in I Tim. 5:17-21. Ungodly conduct or attitude substantiated in the manner given in this passage will result in a vote of the Board of Elders. Any Elder may be removed by a two-thirds vote at such time. Each Elder is also expected to continue in self-examination pursuant to the principles noted above.

#### Section 4: TEACHING-ELDER, BISHOP, PASTOR

##### *Clause A: Necessity*

There shall always be at least one Elder who has given himself wholly to laboring in the Word and doctrine. This person will fill the office of Bishop, the position commonly associated with the term Pastor. Such an Elder who rules well shall be financially supported by the assembly as taught in I Tim. 5:17-18.

The Elders are responsible for determining the proper compensation of the Teaching-Elder. (Bishop)

*Note: For the purposes of this document the word Bishop will refer to "Teaching-Elder/Pastor"*

##### *Clause B: Qualifications of Bishop*

A man must meet the following qualifications to be considered for election as a Bishop: (1) male of at least 21 years of age, (2) active membership in GLBC, and (3) satisfaction of the standards of I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The Bishop shall be the lead teaching Elder of the church.

##### *Clause C: Selection and Removal of Bishop*

GLBC shall have a Bishop selected by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board of Elders. The Bishop may be removed by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board of Elders at any time.

##### *Clause D: Term of Office*

The Bishop shall serve indefinitely until the earlier of (1) his resignation or (2) his removal by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board of Elders.

##### *Clause E: Responsibilities of the Bishop*

The Bishop shall be the chief doctrinal and ministerial officer of the church. As chief doctrinal officer, the Bishop shall be responsible to (1) preach the gospel of grace and the revelation of the mystery and (2) protect the church from doctrinal error. As chief ministerial officer, he shall (1) tend to the spiritual needs of the members, (2) oversee all ministries of GLBC, and (3) work with the Board and the members to accomplish the spiritual goals of the assembly as set forth from time to time. The Bishop shall be responsible for accomplishing II Tim. 2:2 and shall regularly train faithful men for the work of the ministry so as to (1) perpetuate the ministry of GLBC until the Lord returns

and (2) lead to the establishment of other grace churches that hold to the Statement of Faith.

*Clause F: Compensation and Performance Review of Bishop (Pastor)*

The Bishop shall receive such compensation and benefits as agreed to by the Bishop and the Board. On an annual basis, prior to the calendar year end, the Board will meet, without the Bishop present, in an effort to discuss and decide upon an accepted standard of performance and compensation for the Bishop going into the New Year and becoming effective on January 1<sup>st</sup> of the New Year. Prior to this meeting, for the Board's consideration, the Bishop will submit to the board a written statement outlining his expectations, goals, changes in duties, as well as related financial needs going into the New Year. All expectations and decisions will be presented in writing by the Chairman of the Board, from the Board of Elders, to the Bishop; to eliminate any misconceptions or misunderstandings of what is to be expected in the way of job performance as well as compensation. In the event that the Board is not able to meet as outlined above, all increased benefits that are applicable will be paid to the Bishop on a retroactive basis.

Section 5: DEACONS

The Elders are to be assisted in their responsibilities by a group of men called "Deacons."

*Clause A: Qualification of Deacons*

A man must meet the following qualifications to be considered for election as a Deacon: (1) male of at least 21 years of age, (2) active membership in GLBC, and (3) satisfaction of the standards of I Tim. 3:8-13.

*Clause B: Selection of Deacons*

The Board of Elders shall appoint Deacons, as appropriate, to help carry out the ministries of GLBC. At any time, the Board, by majority vote, may appoint a man who meets the foregoing requirements to be a Deacon. There shall be no limit as to the number of men who may be appointed as Deacons. At the October Board meeting of each year, the Board shall consider whether to appoint any additional Deacons.

*Clause C: Term of Office*

A Deacon shall serve indefinitely until the earlier of (1) his resignation or (2) his removal by a majority vote of the Board. The Board shall consider whether to remove any Deacon who has not actively participated in the life of GLBC for a six month period.

*Clause D: Responsibilities of Deacons*

Deacons shall be responsible for helping the Board accomplish the spiritual goals of the church and shall be role models to the church for their service and labour. Deacons shall not participate in the deliberation of the Board of Elders but shall be recognized for their leadership in service.

*Clause E: Accountability and Discipline of Deacons*

All procedures followed in the discipline of an Elder will also apply to Deacons. See Article III, Section 3, Clause F for details.

Section 6: STAFF

Such staff as is necessary or appropriate for the work of the church may, upon recommendation of the Pastor, or another Elder, be appointed by the Board of Elders, and shall be subject to the oversight of the Pastor and Board of Elders. Such staff may resign at any time or may be dismissed at the discretion of the Pastor or a majority of the Board of Elders.

Section 7: TEACHERS

Teaching within the body is not limited to the Elders and the appropriate utilization of other qualified members in this area is consistent with the Scriptural pattern (II Tim. 2:2). With the concurrence of the Pastor and the Board, qualified members may be appointed by the Board of Elders as teachers in the assembly and shall there by exercise such authority as is necessary to accomplish the teaching ministry. This does not, of course, preclude believers from engaging in ministry individually or in groups in accordance with the Word of God.

Section 8: COMMITTEES

The Board of Elders may appoint Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Committees for the ministry areas of the church. One or more Elders may serve as ex-officio members of any committee in an advisory capacity and as a liaison between the Committee and the Board of Elders. Committee members shall possess those qualifications the Board of Elders deem appropriate and necessary for the specific committee to which they are appointed. The Elder Board may reorganize or dissolve committees in keeping with the ministry and changing needs of our assembly.

**Article IV: Rules of Order**

The Board may conduct its business informally, but in the event of a dispute, Robert's Rules of Order, as last revised, shall be the parliamentary manual for GLBC.

Meetings of the Board of Elders may be called, upon notice to all Elders, by (1) the Chairman of the Board or (2) a majority of the Elders. All decisions will be made by a majority vote of the Board of Elders. In the event of a tie, the Bishop/Pastor shall cast the deciding vote. A quorum of the Board of Elders shall be two-thirds of its membership. Proxy voting shall not be permitted.

#### **Article V: Property**

The Board of Elders along with the Deacons is charged with the responsibility of proper oversight, maintenance and care of the church facilities. Use of church property by church members for purposes other than the regularly scheduled meetings and activities is delineated by the *Building Use Policy and Application* established by the GLBC Board of Elders.

#### **Article VI: Dissolution**

If the dissolution of this corporation occurs, the Board of Elders shall, at their discretion, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the corporation, dispose of all assets of the corporation in full accord with the then existing regulations of the Internal Revenue Code (or corresponding provision of any United States law).

#### **Article VII: Amendment**

Any article or section of this Constitution may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the Board of Elders at any properly-convened meeting.