

CONSTITUTION
OF THE
GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
OF
CISSNA PARK, ILLINOIS

Article I

Name

The name of this church shall be the Grace Bible Church of Cissna Park, Illinois incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois.

Article II

Purpose

The purpose of this church will be to establish and maintain a place of public worship of Almighty God; to unite ourselves in the bonds of brotherly love and fellowship; to meet together and truly worship God in Spirit and Truth and to receive spiritual teachings; to so place ourselves, individually and collectively, in the perfect will of God, that by our actions we demonstrate the mutual love of Christ in us; that thereby, lost and seeking souls know of a surety that we are an instrument of God; to propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ at home and abroad in keeping with The Great Commission; to “study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15). “The Statement of Faith given in Article III is a guide to every member of the congregation in outlining the key doctrines based on the Holy scriptures, to which we attest to be true, and to which we align ourselves to practice to the best of our ability through the power of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, as members of this congregation we submit ourselves to the governing principles of this church as outline in Article IV.” Stated services will be held weekly. The Lord’s Supper will be practiced regularly. The ordinance of baptism will be administered to believers as requested.

Article III

Statement of Faith

1. The Bible

We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be inspired Word of God, the supreme revelation of God’s will for the salvation of man and the final authority for all Christian Faith, life and conduct. (2Tim. 3:16-17; 2Pet. 1:19-21).

2. God

We believe in one God, the creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:18-19; Deut. 6:4)

3. Christ

We believe in the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His substitutionary death by the shedding of His blood on the cross, His bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven. His present High-priestly ministry and His personal imminent and premillennial return. (John 1:1; Luke 1:20-35; 2Cor. 5:21; 1Cor. 15:1-7; Heb. 7:24-27; Acts1:9-11; 1Thes. 4:13-17; 2Thes. 1:7-9; Rev. 3:10; Rev. 19:11-16)

4. The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, and indwells, guides, instructs, fills, empowers all who believe. (John 16:8-11; 2Cor. 12:12-14, Eph. 1:13-14; John 16:13; Eph. 5:18)

5. Satan

We believe in the personality of Satan, who is a fallen creature and the father of sin, and that he shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire. (Job 1:6-7; Isa. 14:12-17; Matt. 4:2-11; 25:41; Rev. 20:10)

6. Man

We believe that man was directly created in God's image and likeness, but that in Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; that man is totally depraved and of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition. (Gen. 1:26-27; Rom. 3:22-23; Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3)

7. Salvation

We believe in salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus; that the death of Jesus Christ and His resurrection, provide the only ground of justification and salvation for all who believe, and that only such as receive Jesus Christ by personal faith are born of the Holy Spirit and thus, become the children of God. We believe that all the redeemed are kept by God's power and that it is privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of eternal salvation. (Eph. 2:8-10; Gal. 2:16, 3:11; John 3:3-6, 3:16, 5:25; 1 John 5:11-13)

8. Christian Conduct

We believe that all that are saved are called to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; that it is commanded of God to remain separate from false doctrine sinful pleasures, practices and associations (Rom. 6:1-13; Gal. 5:13-25; 2 Cor. 5:14-15, 6:17, 7:1)

9. The Church

We believe that all who are born again of the Holy Spirit during this dispensation of grace are members of the church which is the Body and Bride of Christ; we believe that members of the Body of Christ should assemble with a Scripturally sound local church for worship, fellowship, teaching, united testimony and observance of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. (Eph. 1:22-23, 4:4-6; Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:41-47)

10. Missions

We believe that it is the obligation of all the saved to witness by life, word and sound missionary agencies to the whole world the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:45-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8)

11. Eternal Rest

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all the dead, of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord, and of the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment. (Matt. 25:46; John 5:28-29, 11:25-26; Rev. 20:5-15)
Marriage

12. Marriage

We believe that marriage is the permanent, exclusive, comprehensive, and conjugal "one flesh" union of one man and one woman, intrinsically ordered to procreation and biological family, and in furtherance of the moral, spiritual, and public good of binding father, mother and progeny. (Gen. 1:27-28, Gen. 2:18-24, Matt. 19:4-9, Mark 10:5-9, Ephesians 5:31-33)

13. Sexual Immorality

We believe that sexual acts outside of marriage are sinful and should not be practiced by members, who are instead to resist and refrain from any and all sexual acts outside of the definition of marriage – examples include but are not limited to such common practices such as co-habitation, adultery, fornication, incest, zoophilia, pornography, prostitution, pedophilia, polygamy, or same-sex acts. (Ex. 20:14, Lev. 18:7-23, Lev. 20:10-21, Deut. 5:18, Matt. 15:19, Matt. 5:27-28, Rom. 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 6:9-13, I Thess. 4:3, Heb. 13:4, Gal. 5:19, Eph. 4:17-19, Col 3:5)

14. Gender Identity

We believe that God created mankind in His image: male and female, who are genetically different but with equal personal dignity. We encourage members to affirm their biological sex, and to refrain from any and all attempts to physically change, alter, or disagree with their biological sex. (Gen. 1:26-28, Rm. 1:26-32, 1 Cor. 6:9-11)

15. Celibacy

We believe that the Holy Scripture grants two life-enhancing options for human sexual behavior: (1) the conjugal ‘one flesh’ marital union of one man and one woman; and (2) celibacy. Either is a gift from God, given as He wills, for His glory and the edification of those who receive and rejoice in His gift for them. We seek to celebrate and affirm celibacy and faithful singleness.

16. Divorce

We believe that marriage is the conjugal ‘one flesh’ marital union of one man and one woman, and should rightfully last until the death of the husband or the wife. Because of the sinfulness of this mankind, we recognize that divorce is permitted as a concession, but we believe that it should always be an action of last resort. We believe that divorce, except in the instances of spousal infidelity, which includes but is not limited to adultery (Matt. 19:3-9), abuse (Ex 21:7-11), and abandonment (1 Cor 7:15-16), should not be pursued within members of the congregation. (1 Cor 7:10-11)

17. Redemption

We believe that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and therefore redemption, forgiveness and spiritual cleansing is available for all sins. We will welcome into membership and endeavor to treat with respect, compassion and sensitivity all who have practiced sinful behavior in the past, but are now committed to resisting the temptation to engage in immoral acts. (Matt. 11:28-30, Rom. 3:23, Eph. 2:1-10, 1 Cor. 10:13, Heb. 2:17-18, Heb. 4:4-16, I John 1:9)

Note: This statement is not intended to set forth the complete doctrinal position of Grace Bible Church of Cissna Park. We recognize that no statement or confession of faith includes all the truth of Scriptures.

Article IV

Government

1. Church Leadership

A. Overview

Church Boards: The congregation shall be represented by a Board of Elders and a Board of Deacons, the two leadership positions established in the N.T. The Elders shall oversee the spiritual development of the church. The Deacons shall manage the physical and material needs of the church.

Other Officers: Other officers may be elected by the congregation upon the suggestion of the Boards. The terms and responsibilities of such officers shall be established by the congregation.

Qualifications: Each elected officer shall 1) give a clear evidence of regeneration by testimony of his faith, 2) have publicly identified with Christ by following Him in believer’s baptism, 3) demonstrate a life under the control of the Holy Spirit, 4) be in agreement with the statement of faith and constitution of the church, 5) be regular in church attendance and 6) hold no other elected office in the church.

Authority: All church officers are servants of the people they lead. They shall at all times be subject to the majority vote of qualified voters at an officially called business meeting.

Vacancy: In the case of a vacancy in any elected office, the congregation shall be responsible for electing a person to fill the unexpired term of such office.

B. Board of Elders

Qualifications: Elders shall meet the biblical qualifications set down in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

Election: Elders shall be elected by a two-thirds vote of qualified voters. Absentee ballots will be considered by the Elder Board under special circumstances. The Pastor shall serve as a full-voting member of the Elder Board.

Term: The term of a lay elder shall be 5 years, after which he is eligible to begin a new term upon a member vote of 2/3. An elder may serve as many consecutive terms given: he desires it, he is reaffirmed by member vote (every 5 years), and he is approved by a majority vote of the current elders.

A lay elder term may be terminated by: the elder not seeking another term, his resignation, failure to receive a 2/3-member vote, a majority vote of the current elders to remove him, or after a process of accusation, rebuke, failure to repent, and removal for persistent sin as outlined in 1 Tim 5:19-20.

Lay elders who choose not to begin a new term will not be considered elders nor have any responsibilities thereof and will be able to serve in other capacities, including on the deacon board. They too will be eligible for eldership in the future if they so desire.

Should a lay elder desire a Sabbatical, he shall still have the title of elder and function as an elder to whatever degree he chooses. The Sabbatical shall not exceed one year, and if so, either resignation or return to full duties is required.”

Responsibilities: The Board of Elders shall oversee the spiritual development of the church, guide the church in maintaining the general practice of adhering to the Statements of Faith, and to serve as the spiritual authority in defining all matters of doctrine and church practices. This includes leadership in the areas of Evangelism and Discipleship, Missions, Christian Education, Pastoral Ministries, Music, Worship and Youth Ministry.

C. Board of Deacons

Qualifications: Deacons shall meet the biblical qualifications set down in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

Election: Deacons shall be affirmed individually by two-thirds vote of the qualified voters. Absentee ballots will be considered by the Elder Board under special circumstances. The Pastor shall serve as a full-voting member of the Deacon Board.

Term: The term of Deacon shall be three years after which time a Deacon may be renominated after a one year rotation off of the Board of Deacons. Terms shall be so arranged so that only one-third of the terms expire in any one year.

Responsibilities: The Board of Deacons shall manage the physical and material needs of the church. This includes leadership in the areas of Finances, Building and Grounds, Fellowship, and Deacon Ministries.

D. Shared Leadership

Financial Authority: Financially, the authority of either Board shall be limited to 3% of the approved annual budget unless approved by the congregation.

2. Pastor

Upon the recommendation of the Elder board, the congregation shall confirm a pastor to serve until his pastorate is terminated by resignation or by request of the congregation by majority vote.

A. Call of Pastor: A 4/5ths vote of the qualified voters shall constitute a call and the term of office shall become indefinite. In all voting upon Pastors, the vote shall be by secret ballot.

B. Duties of Pastor: The duties of the Pastor shall be to:

- 1) Preach the Word of God as God gives him the ability, to visit and pray for the sick as necessity arises, to encourage the weak, to reprove and warn the unruly, to give advice as needed and be ready to every good work, to pray for and comfort those who mourn, and encourage all members to participate in these duties as the Lord gives them ability. He is to exercise a shepherding ministry with the congregation and equip the believers for the work of the ministry.
- 2) Advise and counsel with the members of the church with regard to business pertaining to the spiritual, moral and material affairs of the Church.
- 3) By virtue of his office, the Pastor shall be an official member of the Elders and an ex-officio member of all other church organizations and committees.

Termination of Service: The relationship between Pastor and Church may be dissolved by either the giving of two months notice, or otherwise, by mutual consent.

3. Congregational Meetings

- A. An annual meeting of the church shall be held in a timely manner following the conclusion of the church fiscal year. It should be announced two weeks prior.
- B. Election of officers shall take place at a congregational meeting the last Sunday night in April. Newly elected officers will assume their duties May 1.
- C. The Boards shall be elected by paper ballot.
- D. A simple majority of those present shall decide on an issue.

4. Membership

We believe that all who are born again of the Holy Spirit are members of the Church, which is the Body and Bride of Christ. We also believe that it is in accordance with the Scriptures that a believer be active and affiliated with a local congregation in which they can grow spiritually and serve Christ. We call this public affiliation to Grace Bible Church membership. To become a member of Grace Bible Church a person must demonstrate:

- 1) Saving faith: They must give a public testimony (written or verbal) that they have trusted Christ as their personal Savior and acknowledges that their salvation is by faith alone through Christ's finished works.
- 2) Doctrine: They must read the doctrinal statement and constitution of Grace Bible Church and be in total agreement.
- 3) Church Attendance: They pledge to be consistent as God's providence permits in the regular assemblies of the congregation for worship, prayer, and matters of church business.
- 4) Spiritual Life: With God's help they will faithfully strive to grow spiritually. Which includes regular Bible study and prayer, witnessing to others, and submission to the discipline of church leaders.
- 5) Service: They are willing to minister to others according to their God given talents.
- 6) Relationships: They strive to support in prayer, concern, love, encouragement, material needs, and avoid behavior which does not edify others.
- 7) Stewardship: They will contribute their time, talents, and money to God's work as He enables.

Membership to the congregation must be approved by the church leadership.

5. Appointment

Officers and committees not named herein shall be appointed under the direction of the Elder Board, due to notices being given the congregation to allow for prayer and volunteering of services.

Article V

Termination or Dissolution

In the event it becomes necessary to dissolve and terminate Grace Bible Church of Cissna Park, Illinois, The Elder Board shall distribute all remaining assets, if any, after all just expenses have been paid, to one or more organizations organized and operated for one or more of the exempt purposes described in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and which adheres to the basic Scriptural Doctrines of said Grace Bible Church.

Article VI

Amendments

This constitution may be amended by a 2/3rds vote of voting members present providing said amendment has been read to the congregation in at least two services preceding the day of the meeting.

