



Constitution

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jn. 1:14

Preamble

We, the congregation of Grace Church of Ovilla, do ordain and establish the following articles, which form our Constitution, this March 5, 2000.

Article I: Name of Church

The name of this church shall be Grace Church of Ovilla, Inc.

Article II: Purpose and Goals

- A. Grace Church of Ovilla is a denominationally unaffiliated local church. We are unhampered by the restrictions and decisions of other churches or denominations that would determine the ministry and message of our church. We believe that the Bible is God’s holy and inspired Word. Therefore, we draw from the Scriptures the principles that determine our beliefs and practices. It is the Word of God, rather than the word of men, that directs our church.
- B. We plan to meet frequently for worship, prayer, instruction, and fellowship. The message we declare to young and old alike is based upon a literal, grammatical, and historical interpretation of the entire Bible. We proclaim the truths of the Bible, being confident that God is glorified and man’s needs are met when His truths are presented.
- C. Our mission as a church is to receive God’s grace, appropriate it as devoted followers of Jesus Christ, and dispense it within the community and around the world. Acts 2:42 states that the church has four major areas through which it fulfills its mission in the world:
 1. Worship has as its primary goal expressing to God the esteem which His people hold for Him.
 2. Christian education promotes learning among God’s people and a response of personal obedience to the Scriptures.
 3. Fellowship is designed to promote the interpersonal caring and sharing of God’s people, one to another, as an outgrowth of their fellowship with God.
 4. Outreach touches the world at large with the good news of Jesus Christ and the salvation He offers.
 5. Grace Church of Ovilla further believes that each member of the body has been given, by the Holy Spirit, a spiritual ability which they are not to neglect, but rather to practice (1 Tim. 4:14-15). It is through the exercise of these spiritual gifts that each member will be contributing to the life of the body.

Article III: Doctrinal Statement

Refer to Appendix (1) for the doctrinal statement (Longer Statement of Faith) of Grace Church of Ovilla

Article IV: Membership

Section A. Essence of Membership

We believe that all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ are members of the universal church, the body of Christ. However, the New Testament also emphasizes the importance of believers gathering together in local churches. The criterion for membership in the local church should be the same as in the universal church; therefore, the essential requirement for membership in Grace Church of Ovilla shall be affirmation of personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Section B. Criteria

Everyone is welcome to attend the services of Grace Church of Ovilla. However, in order to implement the principles of accountability and commitment to the local body of Christ as defined and practiced in the New Testament, Grace Church of Ovilla recognizes the need for formal membership.

Membership shall be open to those who have personally received Jesus Christ as their Savior. Members have the full privileges and responsibilities of church membership. All members, 18 years of age and older, are eligible to vote.

Section C. Procedure

All individuals who have personally received Jesus Christ as their Savior may become members of Grace Church of Ovilla through the following procedure:

1. They will attend membership classes. (Optional for members under the age of 13.)
2. They will have a personal interview with two leaders (elders or their designees) to verbalize their personal testimony and express their general agreement with the purposes, goals, constitution, and doctrinal statement of Grace Church of Ovilla.
3. They will sign a statement of faith that affirms their desire for membership and serves as a formal record of their membership. No church letter of transfer shall be accepted or granted.
4. They will be baptized through immersion at Grace Church of Ovilla or will have received baptism in their past from an evangelical church.
 - a. Grace Church of Ovilla will accept infant or believer's baptism from another evangelical church. The mode used may be immersion (dunking), affusion (pouring), or aspersion (sprinkling).
 - b. Current members who have not been baptized will be encouraged to undergo baptism (by immersion), but will not be required to do so (grandfathered).
 - c. Believer's baptism will be taught as the official form of baptism at Grace Church of Ovilla.

Section D. Receiving Member

All approved applicants shall be publicly presented to the church body at a regular worship service. At that time, they shall be extended the right hand of fellowship signifying membership.

Section E. Expectations for Members

Membership in Grace Church of Ovilla involves commitment and accountability to the body of Christ that is expressed practically in the following ways:

1. General agreement with the doctrinal statement of the church

2. Nurturing of one's personal walk with Jesus Christ (Jn. 8:31-32; 15:7; Heb. 10:24-25)
3. Living a life of faithful stewardship of the spiritual and financial resources that God has entrusted (Mt. 6:19-21,23,33; Lk. 6:38, Rom. 12:4-6; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Cor. 14; 2 Cor. 8:1-9; Eph. 4:11-13; I Pet. 4:10)
4. Willingness to become actively involved in ministry within the church
5. Faithful attendance at the regular worship services of the church, as well as at congregational meetings

Section F. Church Discipline

God's Word requires church leaders to exercise discipline over any member who is living (either in doctrine or in practice) in a manner which is contrary to the commands, principles, or normative examples of Scripture. The purpose of such discipline is to honor and glorify God, encourage and strengthen Christians, reconcile and restore those who are alienated by sin, protect the purity of the church, and deter further sin in the individual Christian and the church. This discipline shall take the form of private exhortation of the member according to the steps of Matthew 18:15-17 by other members or elders of Grace Church of Ovilla. If the member is unrepentant or persists in error, public exhortation and dismissal from membership may be invoked at the discretion of the elders. Causes for discipline include moral evil in conduct, personal belief in or teaching of doctrinal error, or activities that cause division in the Body of Christ. Before a final council decision is made to exercise public discipline, the recourse of Matthew 18 will have been exhausted and the member will have been given the opportunity for a hearing before the Council of Elders. The above steps shall be carried out with an attitude of love, concern, and humility, and shall be motivated by a sincere desire to see repentance and restoration of fellowship. (Mt. 6:14-15, 18:21; Lk. 17:3; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:32)

Section G. Discontinuation of Membership

At the discretion of the Council of Elders, membership can be terminated for members who:

- Request to be removed
- Depart from their previously expressed agreement with the doctrinal statement of the church
- Remain unresponsive to loving discipline administered according to Scripture
- Clearly manifest disinterest and inactivity in the life of the church

Section H. Restoration of Membership

A person seeking to be restored to membership will be interviewed by two or more church leaders (pastor, elders, or their designees). If the person was removed under discipline, then satisfactory evidence of repentance and reconciliation must be presented to the elders. The reason for the exclusion having been corrected, the Council of Elders, by a unanimous vote, may return the person to membership.

Article V: Church Officers

Section A. Council of Elders

The Council of Elders of the church shall consist of a lead pastor and members of Grace Church of Ovilla who are selected by the procedure described below. The elders shall appoint future additions or replacements as the need arises. The qualifications of nominees shall be evaluated as stated in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:5-9. Qualified nominees who agree to serve shall be presented to the regular church membership for affirmation. Non-staff (unpaid) elders shall serve for a maximum of two (2) years. After an elder has completed his term, he is ineligible for a reappointment as an elder for a minimum of six (6)

months. This practice allows for a short sabbatical for these elders as well as a way to reconfirm their position on the Council of Elders. His reappointment to the council is based on an evaluation of his qualifications to serve as stated in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. This evaluation for reappointment will be conducted by the elders in office.

The initial Council of Elders will determine a rotation schedule for individual terms.

A quorum shall consist of two-thirds of the members of the council and this attendance will be necessary for conducting official business.

Voting of the council should be unanimous. If such is not received, the matter is to be delayed until the next meeting, giving opportunity for further prayer. A unanimous vote is also sought on the second vote. If a unanimous vote is not obtained in the next meeting after a period of prayer and fasting, and it is apparent that a unanimous vote cannot be reached, a two-thirds majority of those voting shall then be required to pass the motion.

Section B. Selection of Elders

Nomination of Elders – Nominations of men to be considered for the office of elder shall come from the Council of Elders. The council shall have the responsibility of assessing the qualification of each prospective candidate, making selections, and overseeing the training of those men.

Appointment of Elders – Upon the successful completion of the elder’s training program, each candidate will be presented to the council for approval as a qualified candidate for the office of elder. Upon unanimous approval of the Council of Elders, a quorum being present, each candidate shall be presented before the congregation.

Affirmation of Elders – The members of the congregation shall have a specified period of time (the exact amount of time will be communicated at the time in which the names are presented) to bring forward any significant cause for denial of office, be it unfitness or other cause, that would prevent a candidate from faithfully serving in the office of elder. After the specified time period, the candidate shall be presented to the congregation for unanimous affirmation.

Section C. Responsibilities of Elders

1. It shall be the duty of the elders in cooperation with the pastor, to establish policies, to direct the spiritual affairs of the church, to act for the church in the reception of members, to conduct the examination of those who seek to unite with the church, to keep order in the public assemblies of the church, and to exercise discipline where it is needed. Also, it shall be their duty to cooperate with the pastor in the shepherding of the membership of the church, tenderly “watching for their souls as they must give account,” healing so far as possible all differences, giving counsel and comfort to the poor, the sick and the afflicted, and making provision for the supply of the pulpit in case of the pastor's absence and his failure to furnish a supply for same.
2. The elders have the authority to oversee the reception and distribution of church funds. Responsibility for actual receipt and distribution of funds may be delegated to the deacons. The elders will designate one deacon as treasurer of the church.
3. The Council of Elders shall select a chairman to serve for a period of four months.
4. It shall be the duty of the chairman of the Council of Elders to preside at all meetings of the council, and, in his absence, this responsibility shall fall upon the vice-chairman.

5. One elder shall be designated by the council as secretary. It shall be his duty to keep the records of all actions taken by the Council of Elders and of the congregation, and to conduct the official correspondence of the council.
6. Requirements for Action without Meeting: Any action of the council may be taken without a meeting if unanimous consent shall be reached among all the members of the council entitled to vote. Action taken in this manner shall be recorded in the official minutes of the next meeting of the council. These requirements shall not apply to the procedures for removal of an elder, pastor, or deacon from office.

Section D. Resignation or Dismissal of an Elder

1. When an elder tenders his resignation, the same shall be in writing. The resignation shall be presented to the council at the first regular meeting after its receipt. The council shall take final action on his resignation.
2. If an elder becomes unworthy to hold office and the Council of Elders deems it desirable to rescind his appointment to service in said office, they shall select a committee, with the pastor as chairman of the committee. This committee shall make a report, with recommendations, to the council. Unanimous vote will be required for removal. The elder under consideration shall refrain from voting.

Section E. Lead Pastor

1. Responsibilities of the Lead Pastor: The lead pastor shall have general oversight and responsibility for the shepherding and pastoring of the flock, being the primary overseer of the church. He shall be responsible for providing general guidance to the church and overseeing the implementation of the policies established by the Council of Elders. He shall be responsible for the general oversight, coordination, administration, and operation of all programs and personnel of the church. It shall be the duty of the pastor, as an elder, to teach the Word of God as contained in the Old and New Testaments, to administer the ordinances, to direct all services of worship, and, with the other elders, oversee the spiritual interests of the church. It shall be the responsibility of the lead pastor to be the primary spokesperson of the policies, goals, direction, vision, and ministry of the church to the members as well as to the broader community at large. The lead pastor shall be responsible for guiding the Council of Elders to establish the church's distinctive values and visions.
2. The pastor can attend any council or committee meeting of the church at his discretion unless his attendance is specifically limited by this constitution or by the Council of Elders.
3. Nomination of the Lead Pastor: The Council of Elders shall appoint a search committee, composed of elders and members of the congregation, to seek a candidate for the position of lead pastor. The search committee will be chaired by an elder, and shall recommend candidates for the office of lead pastor to the Council of Elders. A single candidate for lead pastor shall be nominated by a unanimous vote of the Council of Elders, a quorum being present. He shall thereafter be recommended to the members of the church at a meeting of the church called for that purpose.
4. Election and Calling of a Lead Pastor: After the nomination and recommendation for a lead pastor by the Council of Elders, the candidate shall be affirmed by a two-thirds vote of the membership of the church in a special called election. Church members will receive an information packet and ballot by mail. The packet will be sent out one week prior to the beginning of the voting period. Once the voting period begins, ballots may be returned to the church in person, by mail, or electronically using a photo of the ballot and sent via email or text message to the church. A ballot box will be available to the membership for two Sundays after the ballots are mailed. Ballots returned to the church during the week will be placed in the ballot box. The ballots will be

counted after the membership has had two Sundays to return the ballots. The ballots will be counted by the Council of Elders and the results tallied. If the candidate fails to receive two-thirds of the vote of the membership, then the Council of Elders will direct the Pastor Search Team to pursue other candidates.

Section F. Evaluation, Correction, or Dismissal of the Lead Pastor

In the event an elder perceives behavior or inadequate performance by the lead pastor that he deems to be detrimental to the work and testimony of the church, that elder and a second elder of the pastor's choice is to go to the lead pastor to openly discuss and attempt to resolve the concern. If they are unable to resolve the concern, the two elders and the lead pastor are to take the matter to the Council of Elders.

Every elder should have the same process of evaluation, correction, and dismissal as the lead pastor: If all of the Council of Elders (save one) seek to expel an offending pastor/elder, a church vote is not required for moral reasons. For any other reason, a church vote is required. The vote should be at least 50.1% in favor of dismissal in order to expel a particular pastor/elder from his office.

Section G. Selection of Deacons

1. Deacons shall be responsible to serve the needs of the congregation under the authority of the elders. Such areas of service include but are not limited to the care and upkeep of church grounds and facilities and the administration of benevolences. By fulfilling these responsibilities, deacons free elders and pastors to give their full attention to spiritual oversight.
2. Qualifications for deacons are as stated in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
3. The Council of Elders appoints deacons, as the need for additional leadership in the church is apparent. These appointments shall be presented to the congregation for affirmation. The term of service shall be three (3) years, with one (1) year leave of absence. The deacon's reappointment to service after leave of absence is subject to the approval of the elders based on the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
4. Other specific duties and responsibilities of the deacons will be prescribed by the elders.

Section H. Resignation or Dismissal of a Deacon

1. When a deacon tenders his resignation, the same shall be in writing. The resignation shall be presented to the council at the first regular meeting after its receipt. The council shall take final action on his resignation.
2. If a deacon becomes unworthy to hold office and the Council of Elders deems it desirable to rescind his appointment to service in said office, they shall select a committee, with the pastor as chairman of the committee. This committee shall make a report, with recommendations, to the council. A unanimous vote will be required for removal.

Section I. Other Ministers and Staff

First, there will be a two-week testing (vetting) period (1 Tim. 3:10) for the church to bring forth any concerns for all full-time, ministerial roles (teaching, caring, etc.). During this two-week period, any church member can bring forth a concern about the applicant and the elders will consider its validity. If the elders are still in favor of the applicant, they can move forward with his/her hire.

For all of those ministers and staff who are in administrative roles, this testing period is not required and the elders can approve of those positions without approval from the church.

Pastoral staff shall meet qualifications consistent with those of an elder. They shall have academic training and/or evident gifts and proven skills commensurate with the particular ministry to which they are being called.

Should the lead pastor leave his position, the ministerial staff shall be under the direction of an elder, appointed by the Council of Elders and agreed upon by the ministerial staff.

Article VI: Congregational Meetings

Section A: Annual Meetings

In the initial stages of ministry, Grace Church of Ovilla will not hold annual meetings. Should future elders determine the necessity for annual meetings, an amendment will be proposed to the regular membership.

Section B: Vision Meetings

Grace Church of Ovilla may hold quarterly vision meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to cast the vision for ministry, report on the church's budget and financial situation, review the work of the ministry, and present any issues pertinent to the congregation of Grace Church of Ovilla. The elders shall preside over these meetings.

Section C. Special Meetings

A special meeting of the congregation may be held as necessary. The Council of Elders shall call this meeting. Only members in good standing shall be eligible to vote. Only the subject announced in the call for the meeting shall be brought before the congregation.

Article VII: Dissolution of the Corporation

This corporation may be dissolved under the terms and provisions of the Non-Profit Corporation Act of the State of Texas, under the charter of the corporation and under the appropriate provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of the federal government.

Article VIII: Disbursement of Funds

In the event this church ceases to function and disbands, all moneys derived from the sale of property or left in funds belonging to the church after payment of debts and obligations shall be donated to an organization with a doctrinal statement in accord with the one appearing in the appendix to this constitution. Preference shall be given to those organizations currently supported by this church. The elders of the congregation shall be responsible to see that all matters are settled properly and in order.

Article IX: Dispute Resolution, Appeal, Binding Arbitration

The leadership of Grace Church of Ovilla endeavors to serve God and one another in love to the best of their ability. However, problems do arise and mistakes occur which may cause grievances and disputes. Since Grace Church of Ovilla is an independent church lacking a denominational structure, there is no denominational resolution mechanism for handling grievances and disputes. 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 discourages civil damage suits between Christians. Therefore, the leadership of Grace Church of Ovilla will offer dispute resolution between its members and encourage members to seek it.

Article X: Constitutional Amendments

A two-thirds majority vote of regular members at a duly announced congregational meeting may amend this constitution. A copy of the proposed changes or amendments must be conspicuously posted in written form or sent by mail to the last known address of all eligible members at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

Approved: March 5, 2000

Amended: Spring 2016

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