Covenant Family Membership Class

July 2007

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in Grace Fellowship Baptist Church. This book is intended to inform you about our church and guide you through the membership process. We want to answer any questions that may arise as you prayerfully consider all the many aspects of uniting with us. Although this book will answer many of the questions you have, it may also cause you to consider others. That is why we have the ***Covenant Family Membership Classes***. It is through the course of our four one-and-a-half-hour classes that you will be able to ask those questions or find clarity to the many implications discovered as you read our various statements.

We also invite you to visit our website at www.gracefellowshipbaptist.org. Our website is setup to accomplish two purposes: (1) to inform and keep you up to date about GFBC; and (2) to serve as a resource in you studies and Christian walk. Everything you find in this book is also online, plus changes more current with our present ministries and activities.

Please remember that we are a new work (January 2007). That means we are in process…just about everything is in startup mode. The only unchanging part about us is God and His Word! We are striving to lay a solid and stable foundation that will sustain Grace Fellowship from now until our Lord's return. If you are seriously and prayerfully considering becoming a part of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church then we will seriously and prayerfully join with you in this important decision.

One last thing… We discourage no one from attending our Covenant Family Membership Class; everyone is welcome. If you attend we will not assume you have made up your mind about our church, but we will consider it a great privilege and will joyfully encourage your presence. Likewise, attendance in our classes is only one of four steps in becoming a member of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church. On the next page you will find the complete process for joining GFBC. Each step will be clearly explained during the classes.

Membership Process

We rejoice that you are considering the important commitment of church membership at Grace Fellowship Baptist Church. The most important consideration is your own personal relationship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. The foundation and health of the local church must be established by God with the members first being joined together as His adopted children. Each Sunday I invite all who gather in our worship service to consider that relationship. We are instructed in the Scriptures to do so often; not to live under a cloud of doubt, but that our assurance may be genuine and grow in strength.

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? —unless indeed you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test. But we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for.

- II Corinthians 5-9

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

- Philippians 2:12-13

This examination is both fearful and joyous. As the undershepherd of GFBC and your friend, I am both commanded and compelled to lead you in this venture. I realize that for some the first response is uneasiness: "I'd rather not do this". I understand this apprehension. It is the same anxiety that causes me to put off calling the doctor or dentist. I would simply rather not deal with the possibility of less than acceptable results from all that "probing". But I come to you in love with the hope of either confirming your relationship in Christ or seeing that relationship established by Him.

"*If the Bible is the cornerstone of our church, then membership is the cement that holds us all together*" – **Mark Dever**. Both Christ and Paul pointed us toward membership for our encouragement, our protection, and

our instruction. We seek to carry out this vision through our four-step process by which to join Grace Fellowship Baptist Church – ***Jeff Hunter, Pastor***.

Membership Class All prospective members must attend our ***Covenant Family Membership Class***. The curriculum includes four (1 ½ hour) classes:

1. **What We Believe:** *Grace Fellowship Baptist Statement of Faith*
2. **Who We Are (I):** *Grace Fellowship Baptist Church Covenant*
3. **Who We Are (II):** *Grace Fellowship Baptist Distinctives*
4. **What We Do:** *Grace Fellowship Baptist Ministries and Purpose*

Membership Application and Interview All prospective members will make formal application for membership in writing (*Appendix Two-page 37*):

1. General information
2. A brief description of how Christ saved you (testimony)
3. A brief description of how Christ has changed your life as a result of your conversion
4. Biblical evidences of true conversion in your life

The written application will include (when aided by an elder) or be followed by a 30-40 minute informal interview with an elder where you will discuss your salvation and relationship with Christ. You will be asked to affirm your commitment by signature of the Doctrinal Statement (what we believe) and Church Covenant.

Elder Recommendation At a regularly scheduled elders' meeting, the pastor will review the applicant's testimony with the other elders. Upon receiving their collective approval, the candidate's application proceeds to the next step: congregational affirmation.

Congregational Affirmation The candidate will be presented at the next scheduled membership affirmation where an elder will present the candidate before the members. Upon the elder recommendation, the members will affirm their brother or sister in Christ by reciting the GFBC Covenant together.

Two helpful books to encourage you as you consider the importance of church membership:

- ***Life in the Father's House*** by Wayne Mack and David Swavely
- ***Stop Dating the Church*** by Joshua Harris

What We Believe

Why should a church have a doctrinal statement or confession? Isn't it enough to simply say, "*I believe what the Bible says*"? The answer to that question is clear whenever you ask the next question, "*What does the Bible mean when it says…?*". Countless individuals and organizations claim the Bible as their authority or guide yet when we take a closer look at those making such a generic claim we find grand disparities. Why is that?

Your first assignment is to read A.A. Hodge's explanation about creeds and confessions and consider for yourself the importance of a church making a clear statement about what will be affirmed and taught and what will be exposed and denied by its elders and teachers.

A Short History of Creeds and Confessions

A.A. Hodge

It is asserted in the first chapter of this Confession [The Westminster Confession of Faith], and vindicated in this exposition that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, having been given by inspiration of God, are for man in his present state the only and the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. All that man is to believe concerning God, and the entire duty which God requires of man, are revealed therein, and are to be believed and obeyed because contained therein, because it is the word of God. This divine word, therefore, is the only standard of doctrine which has intrinsic authority binding the conscience of men. And all other standards are of value or authority only in proportion as they teach what the Scriptures teach.

While, however, the Scriptures are from God, the understanding of them belongs to the part of men. Men must interpret to the best of their ability each particular part of Scripture separately, and then combine all that the Scriptures teach upon every subject into a consistent whole, and then adjust their teachings upon different subjects in mutual consistency as parts of a harmonious system. Every student of the Bible must do this, and all make it obvious that they do it by the terms they use in their prayers and religious discourse, whether they admit or deny the propriety of human creeds and confessions. If they refuse the assistance afforded by the statements of doctrine slowly elaborated and defined by the Church, they must make out their own creed by their own unaided wisdom. The real question is not, as often pretended, between the word of God

and the creed of man, but between the tried and proved faith of the collective body of God's people, and the private judgment and the unassisted wisdom of the repudiator of creeds.

As we would have anticipated, it is a matter of fact that the Church has advanced very gradually in this work of the accurate interpretation of Scripture and definition of the great doctrines which compose the system of truth it reveals. The attention of the Church has been specially directed to the study of one doctrine in one age, and of another doctrine in another age. And as she has thus gradually advanced in the clear discrimination of gospel truth, she has at different periods set down an accurate statement of the results of her new attainments in a Creed or Confession of Faith, for the purpose of preservation and popular instruction. In the mean time, heretics spring up on all occasions, who pervert the Scriptures, who exaggerate certain aspects of the truth and deny others equally essential, and thus in effect turn the truth of God into a lie. The Church is forced, therefore, on the great principle of self-preservation, to form such accurate definitions of every particular doctrine misrepresented as shall include the whole truth and exclude all error, and to make such comprehensive exhibitions of the system of revealed truth as a whole that no one part shall be either unduly diminished or exaggerated, but the true proportion of the whole be preserved. At the same time, provision must be made for ecclesiastical discipline, and to secure the real co-operation of those who profess to work together in the same cause, so that public teachers in the same communion may not contradict one another, and the one pull down what the other is striving to build up. Formularies must also be prepared, representing as far as possible the common consent, and clothed with public authority, for the instruction of the members of the Church, and especially of the children.

Creeds and Confessions, therefore, have been found necessary in all ages and branches of the Church, and, when not abused, have been useful for the following purposes: (1) To mark, disseminate and preserve the attainments made in the knowledge of Christian truth by any branch of the Church in any crisis of its development. (2) To discriminate the truth from the glosses of false teachers, and to present it in its integrity and due proportions. (3) To act as the basis of ecclesiastical fellowship among those so nearly agreed as to be able to labor together in harmony. (4) To be used as instruments in the great work of popular instruction.

It must be remembered, however, that the matter of these Creeds and Confessions binds the consciences of men only so far as it is purely scriptural, and because it is so; and as to the form in which that matter is stated, they bind those only who have voluntarily subscribed the Confession, and because of that subscription.

In all churches a distinction is made between the terms upon which private members are admitted to membership, and the terms upon which office-bearers are admitted to their sacred trusts of teaching and ruling. A Church has

no right to make anything a condition of membership which Christ has not made a condition of salvation. The Church is Christ's fold. The sacraments are the seals of his covenant. All have a right to claim admittance who make a credible profession of the true religion - that is, who are presumptively the people of Christ. This credible profession of course involves a competent knowledge of the fundamental doctrine of Christianity - a declaration of personal faith in Christ and consecration to his service, and a temper of mind and habit consistent therewith. On the other hand, no man can be inducted into any office in any Church who does not protest to believe in the truth and wisdom of the constitution and laws which it will be his duty to conserve and administer. Otherwise all harmony of sentiment and all efficient co-operation in action would be impossible.

The original Synod of our American Presbyterian Church in the year 1729 solemnly adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as the doctrinal standards of the Church. The record is as follows:

> *"All the ministers of the Synod now present, which were eighteen in number, except one, that declared himself not prepared, [but who gave his assent at the next meeting], after proposing all the scruples any of them had to make against any articles and expressions in the Confession of Faith, and Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, have unanimously agreed in the solution of those scruples, and in declaring the said Confession and Catechisms to be the Confession of their Faith, except only some clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters, 'Concerning the Civil Magistrate.'"*

Again, in the year 1788, preparatory to the formation of the General Assembly, "the Synod, having fully considered the draught of the Form of Government and Discipline, did, on review of the whole, and hereby do, ratify and adopt the same, as now altered and amended, as the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, and order the same to be considered and strictly observed as the rule of their proceedings, 'by all the inferior judicatories belonging to the body.

> *"The Synod, having now revised and corrected the draught of a Directory for Worship, did approve and ratify the same, and do hereby appoint the same Directory, as now amended, to be the Directory for the worship of God in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. They also took into consideration the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and, having made a small amendment of the Larger, did approve and do hereby approve and ratify the said Catechisms, as now agreed on, as the Catechisms of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. And the Synod order that the Directory and Catechisms be printed and bound up in the same volume with the Confession of Faith and the Form of Government and Discipline; that the whole be considered as the standard of our doctrine, government, discipline*

and worship, agreeably to the resolutions of the Synod it their present session."

What follows is a very brief and general history of the principal Creeds and Confessions of the several branches of the Christian Church. In this statement they are grouped according to the order of time and the churches which adhere to them:

I. The ancient Creeds, which express the common faith of the whole Church.

The Creeds formed before the Reformation are very few, relate to the fundamental principles of Christianity, especially the Trinity and the Person of the God-man, and are the common heritage of the whole Church.

1. The Apostles' Creed. This was not written by the apostles, but was gradually formed, by common consent, out of the Confessions adopted severally by particular churches, and used in the reception of its members. It reached its present form, and universal use among all the churches, about the close of the second century. This Creed was appended to the Shorter Catechism, together with the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments, in the first edition published by order of Parliament, "not as though it were composed by the apostles, or ought to be esteemed canonical Scripture, . . . but because it is a brief sum of Christian faith, agreeable to the Word of God, and anciently received in the churches of Christ." It was retained by the framers of our Constitution as part of the Catechism. [1] It is as follows:

"*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell (Hades); the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*"

2. The Nicene Creed. This Creed is formed on the basis of the Apostles' Creed, the clauses relating to the consubstantial divinity of Christ being contributed by the great Council held in Nice in Bithynia, A.D. 325, and those relating to the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost added by the Second Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople, A.D.381; and the "filioque" clause added by the Council of the Western Church, held at Toledo, Spain, A.D. 569. In its present form it is the Creed of the whole Christian Church, the Greek Church rejecting only the last added clause. It is as follows:

"I believe in one God, Maker of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only begotten Son of God,

begotten of his Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord the Giver of life, who proeeedeth from the Father and the Son (filioque), who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake by the prophets. And I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

3. As subsequently heretical opinions sprang up in its bosom with respect to the constitution of the person of Christ, the Church was forced to provide additional definitions and muniments of the truth. One heretical tendency culminated in Nestorianism, which maintains that the divine and human natures in Christ constitute two persons. This was condemned by the Creed of the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431. The opposite heretical tendency culminated in Eutychianism, which maintains that the divine and human natures are so united in Christ as to form but one nature. This was condemned by the Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451. These Creeds, defining the faith of the Church as embracing *two natures in one person*, are received and approved by the entire Church. They are sufficiently quoted in the body of the following "Commentary."

4. The Athanasian Creed. This Creed was evidently composed long after the death of the great theologian whose name it bears, and after the controversies closed and the definitions established by the above-mentioned Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. It is a grand and unique monument of the unchangeable faith of the whole Church as to the great mysteries of godliness, the Trinity of Persons in the one God and the duality of natures in the one Christ. It is too long to quote here in full. What relates to the Person of the God-man is as follows:

"*[27] But it is necessary to eternal salvation that he should also faithfully believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. [28] It is therefore true faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is both God and man. [29] He is God; generated from eternity from the substance of the Father; man born in time from the substance of his Mother. [30] Perfect God, perfect man, subsisting of a rational soul and human flesh. [31] Equal to the Father in respect to his divinity, less than the Father in respect to his humanity. [32] Who, although he is God and man, is not two, but one Christ. [33] But two not from the conversion of divinity into flesh, but from the assumption of his humanity into God. [34] One not at all from confusion of substance, but from unity of*

Person. [35] For as rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ," etc.

II. The Creeds/Confessions of the different branches of the Church since Reformation.

1. The Doctrinal Standards of the Church of Rome.

In order to oppose the progress of the Reformation, Pope Paul III. called the last great ecumenical Council at Trent (1545-1563). The deliverances of this Council, entitled Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, form the highest doctrinal rule known to that Church. The decrees contain the positive statements of doctrine The canons explain the decrees, distribute the matter under brief heads and condemn the opposing of Protestant doctrine on each point.

The Roman Catechism, which explains and enforces the canons of the Council of Trent, was prepared and promulgated by the authority of Pope Pius IV., AD. 1556.

The Tridentine Confession of Faith was also imposed upon all the priests and candidates of the Romish Church and converts from other churches.

In addition to these, different papal bulls and some private writings have been authoritatively set up as standards of the true faith by the authority of popes; e.g., the Catechism of Bellarmine, A.D. 1603, and the bull Unigenitus of Clement XI., 1711.

The theology taught in all these papal standards is Arminianism.

2. The Doctrinal Standards of the Greek Church.

The ancient Church divided from causes primarily political and ecclesiastical, secondarily doctrinal and ritual, into two great sections - the Eastern or Greek Church, and the Western or Latin Church. This division began to culminate in the seventh, and was consummated in the eleventh century. The Greek Church embraces Greece, the majority of the Christians of the Turkish Empire and the great mass of the civilized inhabitants of Russia. All the Protestant churches have originated through the Reformation from the Western or Roman Church.

This Church arrogates to herself pre-eminently the title of the "orthodox," because the original creeds defining the doctrine of the Trinity and the Person of Christ, which have been mentioned above, were produced in the Eastern half of the ancient Church, and hence are in a peculiar sense her inheritance. Greek theology is very imperfectly developed beyond the ground covered by these ancient creeds, which that Church magnifies and maintains with singular tenacity.

They possess also a few confessions of more modern date, as "The Orthodox Confession" of Peter Mogilas, A.D. 1642, metropolitan bishop of Kiew, the Confession of Gennadius, A.D. 1453.

3. The Confessions of the Lutheran Church.

The entire Protestant world from the time of the Reformation has been divided into two great families of churches - the LUTHERAN, including all those which received their characteristic impress from the great man whose name they bear; the REFORMED, including all those, on the other hand, which derived their character from Calvin.

The Lutheran family of churches embraces all those Protestants of Germany and the Baltic provinces of Russia who adhere to the Augsburg Confession, together with the national churches of Denmark, of Norway and Sweden, and the large denomination of that name in America.

Their Symbolical Books are:

1. ***The Augsburg Confession***, the joint authors of which were Luther and Melancthon. Having been signed by the Protestant princes and leaders, it was presented to the emperor and imperial Diet in Augsburg A.D. 1530. It is the oldest Protestant confession, the ultimate basis of Lutheran theology, and the only universally accepted standard of the Lutheran churches.
2. ***The Apology*** (Defence) ***of the Augsburg Confession***, prepared by Melancthon A.D. 1530, and subscribed by the Protestant theologians A.D. 1537 at Smalcald.
3. ***The Larger and Smaller Catechisms***, prepared by Luther A.D. 1529, "the first for the use of preachers and teachers, the last as a guide in the instruction of youth."
4. ***The Articles of Smalcald***, drawn up by Luther A.D. 1535, and subscribed by the evangelical theologians in February, A.D. 1537, at the place whose name they hear.
5. ***The Formula Concordiae*** (Form of Concord), prepared in A.D. 1577 by Andrea and others for the purpose of settling certain controversies which had sprung up in the Lutheran Church, especially concerning the relative activities of divine grace and the human will in regeneration, and concerning the nature of the Lord's presence in the Eucharist. This confession contains a more scientific and thoroughly developed statement of the Lutheran doctrine than can be found in any other of their public symbols. Its authority is, however, acknowledged only by the high Lutheran party; that is, by that party in the Church which consistently carries the peculiarities of Lutheran theology out to the most complete logical development.

4. The Confessions of the Reformed or Calvinistic churches.

The Reformed churches embrace all those churches of Germany which subscribe the Heidelberg Catechism; the Protestant churches of Switzerland, France, Holland, England and Scotland: the Independents and Baptists of England and America, and the various branches of the Presbyterian Church in England and America.

The Reformed Confessions are very numerous, although they all substantially agree as to the system of doctrine they teach. Those most generally received, and regarded as of the highest symbolical authority as standards of the common system, are the following:

1. ***The Second Helvetic Confession***, prepared by Bullinger, A.D. 1564. "It was adopted by all the Reformed churches in Switzerland, with the exception of Basle (which was content with its old symbol, the First Helvetic), and by the Reformed churches in Poland, Hungary, Scotland and France," [2] and has always been regarded as of the highest authority by all the Reformed churches.
2. ***The Heidelberg Catechism***, prepared by Ursinus and Olevianus, A.D. 1562. It was established by civil authority, the doctrinal standard, as well as instrument of religious instruction for the churches of the Palatinate, a German State at that time including both banks of the Rhine. It was endorsed by the Synod of Dort, and is the Confession of Faith of the Reformed churches of Germany and Holland, and of the German and Dutch Reformed churches in America.
3. ***The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England***. These were originally drawn up by Cranmer and Ridley, A.D. 1551, and revised and reduced to the present number by the bishops, at the order of Queen Elizabeth, A.D. 1562. These Articles are Calvinistic in doctrine, and constitute the doctrinal standard of the Episcopal churches in England, Scotland, America and the Colonies.
4. ***The Canons of the Synod of Dort***. This famous Synod was convened in Dort, Holland, by the authority of the States General, for the purpose of settling the questions brought into controversy by the disciples of Arminius. It held its sessions from November 13, A.D. 1618, to May 9, A.D. 1619. It consisted of pastors, elders and theological professors from the churches of Holland, and deputies from the churches of England, Scotland, Hesse, Bremen, the Palatinate and Switzerland; the French delegates having been prevented from being present by order of their king. The Canons of this Synod were received by all the Reformed churches as a true, accurate and eminently authoritative exhibition of the Calvinistic System of Theology. They constitute, in connection with the Heidelberg Catechism, the doctrinal Confession of the Reformed Church of Holland, and of the [Dutch] Reformed Church of America.
5. ***The Confession and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly***. A short account of the origin and constitution of this Assembly, and of the production and reception of its doctrinal deliverances, is presented in the next chapter. This is

the common doctrinal standard of all the Presbyterian churches in the world of English and Scotch derivation. It is also of all Creeds the one most highly approved by all the bodies of Congregationalists in England and America. The Congregational Convention called by Cromwell to meet at Savoy, in London, A.D. 1658, declared their approval of the doctrinal part of the Confession and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly, and conformed their own deliverance, the Savoy Confession, very nearly to it. Indeed, "the difference between these two Confessions is so very small, that the modern Independents have in a manner laid aside the use of it (Savoy Conf.) in their families, and agreed with the Presbyterians in the use of the Assembly's Catechisms." [3] All the Assemblies convened in New England for the purpose of settling the doctrinal basis of their churches have either endorsed or explicitly adopted this Confession and these Catechisms as accurate expositions of their own faith. This was done by the Synod which met at Cambridge, Massachusetts, June, 1647, and again August, 1648, and prepared the Cambridge Platform. And again by the Synod which sat in Boston, September, 1679, and May, 1680, and produced the Boston Confession. And again by the Synod which met at Saybrook, Connecticut, 1708, and produced the Saybrook Platform. [4]

Endnotes

1. Assembly's Digest, p. 11.
2. Shedd's Hist. of Christian Doctrine.
3. Neal: Puritans, II. 178
4. Shedd's Hist. of Christian Doctrine.

Lesson One

What does it mean to believe?

We believe many things in general. We are convicted by few things in particular. We are willing to live and die for even fewer things.

Where do we get what we believe?

1. Parents and teachers – What we are taught and exposed to as children
2. Preacher/Bible – Authority
3. Those before us – History and tradition

Consider Hosea 4:4-10, 14 and 6:6

What does it mean to have a standard of belief?

Why do we affirm some things and reject or deny others?

How did we go about developing a doctrinal statement?

1. **Bible** – Authority

2. **History** – Previous confessions and councils

3. **Models** – Contemporaries
    a. Christ Fellowship Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama
    b. Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California
    c. Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington D.C.

Assignment

Your next assignment is to read the ***Grace Fellowship Baptist Church Doctrinal Statement*** in *Appendix One (22).* Mark it up and write questions in the margins and we will do our best to answer or guide you in the answering of these questions.

As you will see, each section begins with the words, "*We teach…*" Our statement is intended to guide our elders and teachers in their responsibilities of instruction and discipleship. One of the first questions you may ask is, "*Must I believe or have the same convictions on every single point of doctrine in the statement to be a member of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church?*" No. Although as elders and teachers we stand with conviction beside our statement and will teach accordingly, we simply ask that all members submit without dissention to our statement. If you find a statement causing ill within your own conscience and will not be able to submit, then we will counsel you to either continue attending with a heart of grace or to diligently pursue another fellowship of believers where you may worship and serve with a clear and free conscience before the Lord.

Assignment

Turn to *Appendix Two (37)* and familiarize yourself with the ***Application for Membership*** so you may begin the process of working on the testimony parts. We will take portions of the upcoming sessions to work on this together and will make ourselves available to counsel with you individually or as a family on how to do this. But remember, the first part is between you and God. It is not for us to determine your relationship with God for you, and we will not make getting into Grace Fellowship Baptist Church more difficult than getting into Heaven. But we believe it is our loving responsibility to counsel with every prospective new member regarding their relationship with Christ.

Who We Are (I) – *GFBC Covenant*

Grace Fellowship Baptist Church is founded upon and held together by two promises or covenants. First, we are established by the covenant God has made with Himself on our behalf. God the Father sent His Son to redeem His Church by fulfilling all righteousness and taking the sin of the elect upon Himself on the cross, thus fulfilling His just requirement for our sin. The Spirit of God, according to the Father's decree and the Son's obedience, completes this covenant by regenerating or causing us to be born from above and able to repent and believe the Gospel upon hearing. Second, we are established locally and remain faithful to one another as brothers and sisters who have been adopted as God's children, by faithful submission and obedience to our church covenant.

If you would like further explanation, please go to our resource page on our website where you can download the mp3s or listen on your computer to each section of the covenant explained by our pastor, Jeff Hunter.

We use our covenant in two key ways today. We require all new members to affirm it by signature before joining the church. Upon congregational affirmation we will make this covenant to one another with all new members. We also reaffirm our commitment to the covenant before taking communion, when we stand as a body and recommit ourselves to it. By featuring the covenant in our life together, we strive to protect ourselves from individual and corporate sin. Of equal importance, we spur one another on to live in light of a greater covenant, one initiated by love, sealed by sacrifice, and kept for eternity by our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Assignment
Please turn to *Appendix Three* (40) and read the ***Grace Fellowship Baptist Church Covenant*** along with all Scripture references.

Lesson Two

What is a covenant?

- Genesis 9:8-17 – Noah
- Genesis 12:1-3 – Abraham
- Exodus 19:5 and 20ff. – Mosaic
- II Samuel 7:8-17 – Davidic
- Genesis 3:15 – Messianic

Why Covenant together?

1. Biblical

2. Strengthens and deepens fellowship

3. Provides continuity and traditions that are biblical

Grace Fellowship Baptist Church Covenant – Appendix Two

Notes

Who We Are (II) – *Distinctives and Constitution and By-Laws*

Distinctives

Distinctives are doctrines, cultural or moral issues and religious elements we believe need further clarity and explanation beyond our Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Distinctives are developed over time as we listen and consider the need for further statements on given topics. Grace Fellowship will avoid hasty responses and will never merely "adopt" other statements of distinction simply to have a position. However, often other churches and ministries have resources, history (experience), and expertise beyond our own. Upon careful consideration and prayer, Grace Fellowship Baptist Church may adopt the statements of these organizations and churches as our own.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

We believe the most important statement a church can make is its belief and proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In a culture where we often reach for the least common denominator for the sake of unity, clear and biblical teaching of the Gospel itself has become a casualty in many churches. Grace Fellowship has adopted as its first distinctive, the Together for the Gospel statement of affirmation and denials relating to the chief tenant of our faith, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Turn to *Appendix Four (41)* and read the ***Together for the Gospel Statement***.

Expository Preaching of God's Word

We believe God's Word is powerful (Hebrews 4:12) and does a mighty work when handled in a proper and revered manner as we are commanded (II Timothy 2:15 and 3:14-4:5). We believe that the Word of God is the foundation for life and godliness (II Peter 1:3-4) and sufficient to accomplish everything God ordains by its proclamation (Isaiah 55:11). We believe that the heart of missions and evangelism is rooted in proclaiming God's Word above all else (Romans 10:13-15). Turn to *Appendix Five (46)* and read Brother Jeff's ***Definition and Justification for Expository Preaching***.

Lesson Three

What are the purposes for distinctives?

1. Doctrinal

2. Cultural

3. Moral

4. Religious

How are distinctives established and included at GFBC?

FAQs about GFBC

Constitution and By-Laws

Although the Church is established by God as the Body of Christ and local churches are made up of likeminded believers who are joined together for the purpose of worshiping, serving, discipling, evangelizing, and fellowshipping together, a church is also a part of the community. As a part of the community it is important to submit to the governing authorities (Romans 13:1 and I Peter 2:13-17). Grace Fellowship Baptist Church is properly established and incorporated as an Alabama non-profit religious organization with articles of incorporation.

Grace Fellowship is also mindful of proper ecclesiastical order within the fellowship and has established a Constitution and By-Laws for the purpose of administrating and perpetuating order and agreed upon church polity among its members.

Assignment
Please turn to *Appendix Six (59)* and read the ***Grace Fellowship Baptist Church Constitution and By-Laws***.

What We Do
Ministries and Purpose

Grace Fellowship Baptist Church is committed to accomplishing the work and ministries we have been commissioned to do by glorifying God and:

- Loving God supremely above all else
- Loving our neighbor as ourselves
- Loving one another
- Serving the Body
- Serving the community
- Proclaiming the name and Excellencies of God around the world
- Living the transformed life

The implications of each of these are staggering. They must be well-thought and executed. The longer we exist as a local church the longer our list of ministries, activities and programs will become. But we must never be defined by these lists. These lists must be defined by the above. Our purpose, which grows out of II Corinthians 5:17-21, is a succinct way of declaring our heart and service.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away;
behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to
himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was
reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and
entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for
Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be
reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in
him we might become the righteousness of God.

- II Corinthians 5:17-21 (ESV)

Lesson Four

Exposition of II Corinthians 5:17-21

Explanation of Purpose

Our Purpose

We will glorify God through the reality of our changed lives in Christ toward the ministry of seeing other lives changed in Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel. We will be missionary Christians in (those who send and support) and we will send Christian missionaries out (those who go in the name of Christ) of this body of believers.

Grace Fellowship Baptist Church

Doctrinal Statement

2007

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THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the 66 books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed.

We teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal, grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

GOD

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence,

eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God the Father. We teach that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son. We teach that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that God the Father created according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).

We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-Man (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9).
We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He was God incarnate (John

1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).
We teach that, in the incarnation, the second Person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-36; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His Body, unto Himself, and will return with His church in glory. (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

- Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46)
- Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15)

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head

of His Body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

God the Holy Spirit. We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternality (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).

We teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost, when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ upon salvation (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible (2 Peter 1:19-21). Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be

filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today, and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

MAN

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 5:12-13; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that, because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by

nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

SALVATION

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Regeneration. We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18 and Romans 8:29). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

Election. We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally

depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part or to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2). We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Justification. We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification. We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that there is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23). In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the

power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Security. We teach that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24). Therefore, we teach that only real believers endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors (Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23). We also teach that He watches over their welfare and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

Separation. We teach that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We teach that, out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us, and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

THE CHURCH

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

We teach that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor/teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

We teach that these leaders lead as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to and pray for their leadership "…as *to* those who will give an account." (Hebrews13:7, 17).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The elders should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8).

We teach the calling of all saints to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

We teach 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).

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). We also teach that, whereas the elements of Communion are *only representative* of the flesh and blood of Christ, participation in the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ, who indwells every believer, and so is present, fellowshipping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We teach that Civil Government is of Divine appointment,
for the interests and good order of human society;
and that civic leaders local, state and federal, are to be prayed for,
conscientiously honored, and obeyed;
except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth
(Romans 13:1-7 and I Peter 2:13-20).

ANGELS

Holy Angels. We teach that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

Fallen Angels. We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by taking numerous

angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-15).
We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10); that he is the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

LAST THINGS

Death. We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8), that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21-24), until the resurrection of the dead as promised by our Savior (John 11:25-26).

Resurrection. We teach that Christ was raised from the dead first (I Corinthians 15:20), and all who belong to Him will be raised incorruptible (I Corinthians 15:21-23) never to die or sin again (I Corinthians 15:50-58), which initiates the first resurrection(Revelation 20:4-6), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15).

We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The Return of Christ. We teach that Christ will return from Heaven to earth according to the decree of the Father (Matthew 24:36 and Acts 1:6-11) when all of

the elect will be united with Him for all eternity (John 14:1-6; John 17:22-26; and I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We teach that the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth, wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15; 21:1-27; 22:1-21). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21-22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN

Being a Christian is more than identifying yourself with a particular religion or affirming a certain value system. Being a Christian means you have embraced what the Bible says about God, mankind, and salvation. Consider the following truths found in Scripture.

God Is Sovereign Creator. Contemporary thinking says man is the product of evolution. But the Bible says we were created by a personal God to love, serve, and enjoy endless fellowship with Him. The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Therefore, He also owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19). That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship.

God Is Holy. God is absolutely and perfectly holy (Isaiah 6:3), therefore He cannot commit or approve of evil (James 1:13). God requires holiness of us as well. First Peter 1:16 says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Mankind Is Sinful. According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin: "There is no man who does not sin" (1 Kings 8:46 and Romans 3:23). That does not mean we are incapable of performing acts of human kindness. But we're utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own (Romans 3:10-12).

Sin Demands a Penalty. God's holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by death (Genesis 2:16-17; Ezekiel 18:4; and Romans 6:23). That is why simply changing our patterns of behavior cannot solve our

sin problem or eliminate its consequences.

Jesus Is Lord and Savior. The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (Colossians 1:16). Therefore, He owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19). That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship. Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Even though God's justice demands death for sin, His love has provided a Savior who paid the penalty and died for sinners (1 Peter 3:18). Christ's death satisfied the demands of God's justice and Christ's perfect life satisfied the demands of God's holiness (2 Corinthians 5:21), thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him (Romans 3:26).

The Character of Saving Faith. True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin (Psalm 51; Luke 13:3,5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9) and pursue Christ (Matthew 11:28-30; John 17:3) and obedience to Him (1 John 2:3). It is not enough to believe certain facts about Christ. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God (James 2:19), but they do not love and obey Him. True saving faith always responds in obedience (Ephesians 2:10 and John 14:15).

Grace Fellowship Baptist Church

Application for Membership

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Street Address: _____ Email: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: (H) _____

Phone: (W) _____ Mailing Address: (if different) _____

Marital Status: (circle one) S M D Spouse: _____

Children

Name: _____ D.O.B. _____ Name: _____ D.O.B. _____

Name: _____ D.O.B. _____ Name: _____ D.O.B. _____

Name: _____ D.O.B. _____ Name: _____ D.O.B. _____

I am seeking membership in Grace Fellowship Baptist Church. God has brought me here: (Circle one)

1. (First time profession of faith) To profess that I have repented of my sins, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, His saving death on the cross for my sins, and His glorious resurrection from the dead proving that He is God. I now desire to be obedient to the Scriptures by making a public declaration of my faith through believer's baptism.

2. To join Grace Fellowship Baptist Church by confession that I have repented of my sins, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, His saving death on the cross for my sins, and His glorious resurrection from the dead proving that He is God. I have previously been baptized by immersion in another church.

Counseled by: _____ **Date:** _____

Testimony

Provide a short description of how and when you received Christ as Lord and Savior.

How has Christ transformed your life since you became a believer and follower of Christ?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

What evidences or fruits have there been in your life since your conversion that would document genuine conversion?

_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

If known, what would you consider to be your spiritual gifts (Romans 1:11-12; Romans 12; I Corinthians 12-14; and Ephesians 4)? _____

_____

Area(s) of ministry where you would like to serve in Grace Fellowship Baptist Church. _____

_____

Grace Fellowship Baptist Church Covenant

The Church
Acts 2:37-47

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to Him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully join (when accepting new members)/renew (when affirming membership) our covenant with each other.

The Church
Ephesians 4:1-16

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Sacred Assembly
Hebrews 10:19-25

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

Brotherly Love
Galatians 5:13, 6:1-5

We will walk together in brotherly love, as we become the members of a Christian Church; we will exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

Brotherly Love
Romans 12:9-21

We will rejoice in each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

Discipleship/Evangelism
I Peter 5:1-5

We will strive to demonstrate Christ to all who may at any time be under our care, endeavor to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example, seek the salvation of our family and friends.

The Changed Life
Romans 6:1-23
II Corinthians 5:11-21

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

Stewardship
Philippians 4:10-19

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

Perseverance
John 17:22-26
I John 2:18-24

We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Empowerment
II Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

TOGETHER *for the* GOSPEL

We are brothers in Christ united in one great cause – to stand together for the Gospel. We are convinced that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been misrepresented, misunderstood, and marginalized in many churches and among many who claim the name of Christ. Compromise of the Gospel has led to the preaching of false gospels, the seduction of many minds and movements, and the weakening of the church's Gospel witness.

As in previous moments of theological and spiritual crisis in the church, we believe that the answer to this confusion and compromise lies in a comprehensive recovery and reaffirmation of the Gospel – and in Christians banding together in Gospel churches that display God's glory in this fallen world.

We are also brothers united in deep concern for the church and the Gospel. This concern is specifically addressed to certain trends within the church today. We are concerned about the tendency of so many churches to substitute technique for truth, therapy for theology, and management for ministry.

We are also concerned that God's glorious purpose for Christ's church is often eclipsed in concern by so many other issues, programs, technologies, and priorities. Furthermore, confusion over crucial questions concerning the authority of the Bible, the meaning of the Gospel, and the nature of truth itself have gravely weakened the church in terms of its witness, its work, and its identity.

We stand together for the Gospel – and for a full and gladdening recovery of the Gospel in the church. We are convinced that such a recovery will be evident in the form of faithful Gospel churches, each bearing faithful witness to the glory of God and the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Article I

We affirm that the sole authority for the Church is the Bible, verbally inspired, inerrant, infallible, and totally sufficient and trustworthy.

We deny that the Bible is a mere witness to the divine revelation, or that any portion of Scripture is marked by error or the effects of human sinfulness.

Article II

We affirm that the authority and sufficiency of Scripture extends to the entire Bible, and therefore that the Bible is our final authority for all doctrine and practice.

We deny that any portion of the Bible is to be used in an effort to deny the truthfulness or trustworthiness of any other portion. We further deny any effort to identify a canon within the canon or, for example, to set the words of Jesus against the writings of Paul.

Article III

We affirm that truth ever remains a central issue for the Church, and that the church must resist the allure of pragmatism and postmodern conceptions

of truth as substitutes for obedience to the comprehensive truth claims of Scripture.

We deny that truth is merely a product of social construction or that the truth of the Gospel can be expressed or grounded in anything less than total confidence in the veracity of the Bible, the historicity of biblical events, and the ability of language to convey understandable truth in sentence form. We further deny that the church can establish its ministry on a foundation of pragmatism, current marketing techniques, or contemporary cultural fashions.

Article IV

We affirm the centrality of expository preaching in the church and the urgent need for a recovery of biblical exposition and the public reading of Scripture in worship.

We deny that God-honoring worship can marginalize or neglect the ministry of the Word as manifested through exposition and public reading. We further deny that a church devoid of true biblical preaching can survive as a Gospel church.

Article V

We affirm that the Bible reveals God to be infinite in all his perfections, and thus truly omniscient, omnipotent, timeless, and self-existent. We further affirm that God possesses perfect knowledge of all things, past, present, and future, including all human thoughts, acts, and decisions.

We deny that the God of the Bible is in any way limited in terms of knowledge or power or any other perfection or attribute, or that God has in any way limited his own perfections.

Article VI

We affirm that the doctrine of the Trinity is a Christian essential, bearing witness to the ontological reality of the one true God in three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each of the same substance and perfections.

We deny the claim that the Trinity is not an essential doctrine, or that the Trinity can be understood in merely economic or functional categories.

Article VII

We affirm that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man, in perfect, undiluted, and unconfused union throughout his incarnation and now eternally. We also affirm that Christ died on the cross as a substitute for sinners, as a sacrifice for sin, and as a propitiation of the wrath of God toward sinners. We affirm the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Christ as essential to the Gospel. We further affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord over His church, and that Christ will reign over the entire cosmos in fulfillment of the Father's gracious purpose.

We deny that the substitutionary character of Christ's atonement for sin can be compromised without serious injury to the Gospel or denied without repudiating the Gospel. We further deny that Jesus Christ is visible only in weakness, rather than in power, Lordship, or royal reign, or, conversely, that Christ is visible only in power, and never in weakness.

Article VIII

We affirm that salvation is all of grace, and that the Gospel is revealed to us in doctrines that most faithfully exalt God's sovereign purpose to save sinners and in His determination to save his redeemed people by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to His glory alone.

We deny that any teaching, theological system, or means of presenting the Gospel that denies the centrality of God's grace as His gift of unmerited favor to sinners in Christ can be considered true doctrine.

Article IX

We affirm that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's means of bringing salvation to His people, that sinners are commanded to believe the Gospel, and that the church is commissioned to preach and teach the Gospel to all nations.

We deny that evangelism can be reduced to any program, technique, or marketing approach. We further deny that salvation can be separated from repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Article X

We affirm that salvation comes to those who truly believe and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

We deny that there is salvation in any other name, or that saving faith can take any form other than conscious belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving acts.

Article XI

We affirm the continuity of God's saving purpose and the Christological unity of the covenants. We further affirm a basic distinction between law and grace, and that the true Gospel exalts Christ's atoning work as the consummate and perfect fulfillment of the law.

We deny that the Bible presents any other means of salvation than God's gracious acceptance of sinners in Christ.

Article XII

We affirm that sinners are justified only through faith in Christ, and that justification by faith alone is both essential and central to the Gospel.

We deny that any teaching that minimizes, denies, or confuses justification by faith alone can be considered true to the Gospel. We further deny that any teaching that separates regeneration and faith is a true rendering of the Gospel.

Article XIII

We affirm that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers by God's decree alone, and that this righteousness, imputed to the believer through faith alone, is the only righteousness that justifies.

We deny that such righteousness is earned or deserved in any manner, is infused within the believer to any degree, or is realized in the believer through anything other than faith alone.

Article XIV

We affirm that the shape of Christian discipleship is congregational, and that God's purpose is evident in faithful Gospel congregations, each displaying God's glory in the marks of authentic ecclesiology.

We deny that any Christian can truly be a faithful disciple apart from the teaching, discipline, fellowship, and accountability of a congregation of fellow disciples, organized as a Gospel church. We further deny that the Lord's Supper can faithfully be administered apart from the right practice of church discipline.

Article XV

We affirm that evangelical congregations are to work together in humble and voluntary cooperation and that the spiritual fellowship of Gospel congregations bears witness to the unity of the Church and the glory of God.

We deny that loyalty to any denomination or fellowship of churches can take precedence over the claims of truth and faithfulness to the Gospel.

Article XVI

We affirm that the Scripture reveals a pattern of complementary order between men and women, and that this order is itself a testimony to the Gospel, even as it is the gift of our Creator and Redeemer.

We also affirm that all Christians are called to service within the body of Christ, and that God has given to both men and women important and strategic roles within the home, the church, and the society. We further affirm that the teaching office of the church is assigned only to those men who are called of God in fulfillment of the biblical teachings and that men are to lead in their homes as husbands and fathers who fear and love God.

We deny that the distinction of roles between men and women revealed in the Bible is evidence of mere cultural conditioning or a manifestation of male oppression or prejudice against women. We also deny that this biblical distinction of roles excludes women from meaningful ministry in Christ's kingdom. We further deny that any church can confuse these issues without damaging its witness to the Gospel.

Article XVII

We affirm that God calls his people to display his glory in the reconciliation of the nations within the Church, and that God's pleasure in this reconciliation is evident in the gathering of believers from every tongue and tribe and people and nation. We acknowledge that the staggering magnitude of injustice against African-Americans in the name of the Gospel presents a special opportunity for displaying the repentance, forgiveness, and restoration promised in the Gospel.

We further affirm that evangelical Christianity in America bears a unique responsibility to demonstrate this reconciliation with our African-American brothers and sisters.

We deny that any church can accept racial prejudice, discrimination, or division without betraying the Gospel.

Article XVIII

We affirm that our only sure and confident hope is in the sure and certain promises of God. Thus, our hope is an eschatological hope, grounded in our confidence that God will bring all things to consummation in a manner that will bring greatest glory to his own name, greatest preeminence to his Son, and greatest joy for his redeemed people.

We deny that we are to find ultimate fulfillment or happiness in this world, or that God's ultimate purpose is for us to find merely a more meaningful and fulfilling life in this fallen world. We further deny that any teaching that offers health and wealth as God's assured promises in this life can be considered a true gospel.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you,
which you received, in which you stand, and by which
you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word
I preached to you – unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:
that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the
Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised
on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures . . . .
I Corinthians 15:1-4

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead,
with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell
on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.
And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory,
because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship
him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."
Revelation 14:6-7

Signed by:

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Expository Preaching: Definition and Justification for it in the Local Church

By Jeff Hunter

Scales are to a musician what the Bible is to an expository preacher. They are the accepted, set and unchanging standards from which all beauty and creativity flow. As a boy I was amazed and somewhat envious of Dave Brubeck as I heard him play. The first time I saw him play, I thought, "This guy does not even try hard and is barely paying attention to what he is doing," and it looked to me as if he just dropped his hands on the keyboard; but wherever he dropped his hands incredible chords and melodies arose. I wanted to play piano like Dave Brubeck, but I discovered that every time I dropped my hands on the keys it sounded just like I had dropped my hands on the keys. The difference, as I discovered, Dave Brubeck spent years locked in a practice room mastering the foundation of all great music - scales. Learning scales teaches the musician not only the ingredients of music but also the relationship between the ingredients and how to move from one note and chord to the next. I hated scales and I hated practicing. The rest, as they say, is history.

Each Sunday thousands of men will enter the pulpit to communicate a message to the millions of people God has assembled before them. What those millions of people hear is less about what the preacher says behind the lectern for those few moments of delivery than what has taken place behind the study desk and on the altar during the days, months and years prior to that preaching moment. The power and persuasion in the hearts of those who hear is a culmination of the preacher's commitment to accurate understanding and application of the text and total dependence upon God's Spirit. The two main ingredients of expository preaching are commitment to and study of the biblical text and prayer.

To establish a good definition of expository preaching one would be wise to depend upon the knowledge and experience of great men from the past who successfully demonstrated

their commitment to the text and unquestionable dependence upon The Holy Spirit before entering the pulpit. The most commanding and perhaps controversial statement I have found is from John R.W. Stott who slices a great swath of elimination in his bold assertion, "It is my contention that all true Christian preaching is expository preaching."[1] Therefore, religious or morality talks which are not derived from Scripture and committed to the integrity of its original meaning are not necessarily Christian and thus cannot be classified, according to Stott, as "Christian preaching". With that statement, Stott reduces the field of religious speakers and discussion about preaching to a narrow standard which we will follow throughout this essay.

What Stott said previously about preaching is a qualifying but not a definitive statement. He goes on to define expository preaching: "Expository preaching (it) refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view."[2]

Preaching is more than an academic commitment; however, it is a philosophical life commitment which may be discovered from men known as much by their godliness as their pulpit and writing skills. John Calvin states, "Preaching is the public exposition of Scripture by the man sent from God, in which God Himself is present in

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[1] John R.W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 125.
[2] Ibid., 125, 126.

judgment and grace;"[3] and Martyn Lloyd-Jones builds upon this, "Any true definition of preaching must say that that man is there to deliver the message of God, a message from God to those people . . . Preaching is delivering what you have received. It is not "silver or gold" (what the world gives) but what God gives."[4] John Piper elevates the definition of preaching to the proper perspective by declaring, "Preaching is a public exultation over the truth that it brings . . . True preaching is not the opinions of mere man. It is the faithful exposition of God's Word . . . preaching is expository exultation. Expository preaching will: feed understanding – teach the mind; and feed feeling – reach the heart."[5]

The clear sense these definitions give is that preaching is a work of God through the man who is committed and submitted to delivering God's Word through both life and proclamation. The nature of a working definition is to move beyond mere description to the setting of parameters or organized limits, benefits and, if pertinent, difficulties for what are and are not included within the concept. Let us now turn our attention to the parameters or essential components of expository preaching. Richard Mayhue lists five elements which must be present to consider the event expository preaching: "(1) The message finds its sole source in Scripture; (2) The message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis; (3) The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal sense and its context; (4) The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture; and (5) The message applies the Scriptural meaning for today."[6] Stott gives four benefits as a part of his

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[3] John Calvin, as quoted in *Gathered Gold*, quoted in Steven J. Lawson, *Famine in the Land*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 104.
[4] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 53, 60, 61.
[5] John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004) 10-11.
[6] Richard Mayhue, "Rediscovering Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. Richard Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 12-13.

definition: (1) Exposition sets limits (to the biblical text); (2) Exposition demands integrity (stay as true as possible to the original intent and meaning); (3) Exposition identifies pitfalls [a] Forgetfulness – going off on a tangent [b] Disloyalty – appearing to remain true to text while straining and stretching it into something different; and (4) Exposition gives us confidence to preach (because it is God's voice and will that is leaned upon and not our own opinion."[7] Finally, in Albert Mohler's definition, he includes three characteristics of expository preaching:

> "Expository preaching is that mode of Christian preaching that takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible. All other issues and concerns are subordinated to the central task of presenting the biblical text. As the word of God, the text of Scripture has the right to establish both the substance and the structure of the sermon. Genuine exposition takes place when the preacher sets forth the meaning and message of the biblical text and makes clear how the word of God establishes the identity and worldview of the church as the people of God. . . . Authentic expository preaching is marked by three distinct marks or characteristics: (1) Authority – because it stands upon the very authority of the Bible; (2) Reverence – this type of preaching requires and reinforces a sense of reverence on the part of God's people; and (3) Centrality – because it demands the central place in Christian worship and is respected as the event through which the living God speaks to His people."[8]

My personal conviction for expository preaching, which comes partially from its definition, will be addressed more fully in the theological justification for expository preaching. It states, "I will glorify God through the clear and contemporary preaching of His Word."

We find beneath the preceding definitions and lists of components and/or characteristics a strong biblical justification for expository preaching. The biblical justification for expository preaching is determined by two elements: (1) what the Bible says and; (2) what we believe about the Bible. The Bible says much about its power and

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[7] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 126-132.
[8] Albert Mohler, "Expository Preaching and the Recovery of Christian Worship," *Commentary by R. Albert Mohler Jr.*, (August 2005), part 3 [on-line]; accessed 26 September 2005; available from http://albertmohler.com/ commentary_print.php?cdate=2005-08-11; Internet.

validity (e.g. Psalm 119) but if we doubt or minimize that power and thus invalidate it from our pulpit by not preaching it with confidence and authority, then what we do not believe about the Bible virtually overrules what the Bible says. When Howard Hendricks says, "Biblical truth is the wardrobe of the soul,"[9] he is agreeing with the Apostle Paul when he says, "*Urge* bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect."[10] The implications toward expository preaching are that those who truly believe the Bible will accept preaching as the outward manifestation of that belief by the preacher and the resultant glad acceptance and obedience by the hearer. Those who adorn the doctrine of God, who are called to preach, will preach the Bible.

We are commanded to "preach the Word…" Another biblical justification for expository preaching is discovered in the description of what we are told to do with it as we preach; "…reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction (2 Tim 4:4)." This can only be accomplished through careful exposition of the Scripture with the end clearly aimed at an active faith response from those who hear. The demands of the Bible, therefore, will never allow us to merely exposit information to be correct in our thinking.

Those who adorn the doctrine of God, who hear the Word proclaimed, will respond by faith with obedience. The goal of expository preaching for the congregation is the biblical mandate to:

> "…prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away,

[9] Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living By the Book* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 284.
[10] Titus 2:9-10 (N.A.S.B).

> he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does."[11]

The fact that the phrase, "it is written," appears fifty-nine times in the New Testament reveals that the Scriptures were given to be actively cited; "it is written… therefore". Four passages support the assertion that the Word of God is powerful when declared and explained: (1) Nehemiah 8:8 where Ezra publicly read and made sense of the Scripture; (2) Acts 20:26, 27 where Paul reminds the Ephesian church how he declared the "whole purpose of God," and for the undershepherds to continue doing the same; (3) Luke 24 where the risen Christ appeared to the men on the road to Emmaus and opened their eyes about Himself through the recalling of the Law and Prophets; and (4) Acts 8:25-40 where Phillip spoke to the Ethiopian eunuch using the Scriptures to reveal Jesus to him.

What we believe about God will determine how we declare Him. Man is naturally man-centered in thinking and practice. Because it is unnatural for man to center his life around anyone or anything other than himself or that which brings pleasure to himself, it stands to reason that to most, theology is merely academic at best and usually irrelevant and complicated. Therefore, when a preacher is homiletically responding to the "natural" needs of his congregation, he will not begin with Scripture (where God is central) but with society/culture (where man is central). However, if a preacher's intention is to be God-centered or theologically accurate, he must begin with Scripture.

Expository preaching, by nature and practice, is that philosophy of preaching which demands we start with the text of Scripture. Because Scripture is the revelation and revealer of God, and theology is the study and understanding of God, preaching

[11] Jas 1:22-25.

that will be most interested in disclosing God to its hearers is that which is tied most closely to Scripture. Its content and structure will be lifted from the text and not imposed on it. Topical or thematic driven pulpits will discover their congregation to be less focused on God than preaching which drives its congregation into God's revealing Word. If we intend for our people to have a godly worldview and to begin with God in making their life decisions, then we must teach them applied theology from the pulpit. This can only be accomplished by expounding the Scriptures.

There is a theological cause and effect process to be discovered by observing the preacher and his pulpit. That which causes the God-centered messenger to preach expository sermons will in effect cause the hearer to receive or reject the message based upon their own approach to the Scriptures. Preachers are generals on the frontline of the battle between the natural tendency of man to make man the center of all things and God's insistence that He alone is to be praised and regarded above all things. John Piper states:

> "The goal of preaching is the glory of God in Christ reflected in the glad submission of His creation. There are two massive obstacles to the attainment of this goal: the righteousness of God and the pride of man. The righteousness of God is His unwavering zeal for the exaltation of His own glory. And the pride of man is his unwavering zeal for the exaltation of man's glory."[12]

We must preach expository sermons in order to change and encourage the core worship and philosophy of our congregation from man to God. The Apostle Paul plainly stated his motivation for what and why he preached when he declared:

> "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive

[12] Piper, *The Supremacy of God In Preaching*, 32.

words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."[13]

The theological justification for expository preaching is the preeminence of God and the ultimate sovereign judgment of His Son. The fullness of this truth was demonstrated at the cross. Therefore, it may be more specifically stated that it is the cross which demands our preaching be expository, for every part of Scripture will inevitably lead us to it. Piper continues:

> "Without the cross, the righteousness of God would demonstrate itself only in the condemnation of sinners, and the goal of preaching would abort – God would not be glorified in the gladness of His sinful creatures. His righteousness would simply be vindicated in their destruction."[14]

Expository preaching is the logical and obedient response to the demand that we always preach Christ at the heart of every message. Once we accept the truth that Scripture will always reveal Christ, we will then confidently proclaim the Word and allow it to do what it was intended to do.

Preachers have two basic ways to approach the Scriptures. First, we may seek to better understand ourselves and the world around us. This is an anthropocentric or man-centered perspective. This worldview will inevitably lead to moralistic and "do better" preaching which focuses on our response to what the Bible says about man. For example, Donald Gowan, when speaking of preacher's faulty preaching from the Old Testament says, "We have wanted to use the Bible as a set of moral examples,…but…most of the book presents, not models of perfect behavior, but the story of how God deals with ordinary, imperfect human beings."[15] This "exploitation" of the text diminishes the larger dimensions of the event "into a surface lesson of the

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[13] 1 Cor 2:1-5.
[14] Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 35.
[15] Donald Gowan, *Reclaiming the Old Testament*, 3 taken from Sidney, Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 117.

text."[16] The second approach we may take is the theocentric or God-centered perspective. This approach is the theological heart of expository preaching as it emphasizes the Bible's first purpose: "to tell the story of God. In relating that story, the Bible naturally also depicts many human characters – not however, for their own sake but for the sake of showing what God is doing for, in, and through them."[17]

"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me" (John 5:39), Jesus told the religious elite of His day. When it comes to the Word of God, today's people are no different than those who lived when Jesus walked the earth. They claimed to believe and even revere the Scriptures, yet they treated them like any other document created to represent and even impose man's will and not God's. Piper concludes his thoughts on this topic with an ominous prediction: "Where the Bible is esteemed as the inspired and inerrant Word of God, preaching can flourish. But where the Bible is treated as a record of valuable religious insight, preaching dies."[18] Therefore, what we believe about God's Word will determine how we declare Him.

What Paul proclaims about the preaching of the cross is as relevant today as it was when he said:

> "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the

[16] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient* Text (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 117.
[17] Ibid., 117, 118.
[18] Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 44.

wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."[19]

This statement is the full explanation of Romans 1:16 where Paul boldly says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

The most general and all encompassing theological imperative given from Scripture is to glorify God in everything we do: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God , and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:19, 20) "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). Those who God has ordained and gifted to preach must do so to His glory; this can only be accomplished by preaching His Word. It is from here that I arrive at my personal conviction about expository preaching; "I will glorify God through the clear and contemporary preaching of His Word."

Along with biblical and theological justifications for expository preaching is the practical justification which is ultimately what we need to see if we are to diligently pursue this approach to preaching. Before exploring this subject we must define what is meant by practical. Certainly we do not mean pragmatic in the sense of "if it works do not question or argue against it." This observation leads to the next question, "what defines success in preaching?" The nature of expository preaching says that we must draw our goals (the end) and our methods (the means) from Scripture. This debate is where the great divide in ministry and preaching arises. If we measure success from the perspective of man, then we will define practical as such and will resist anything that potentially gives failing results by that standard. The emphasis here is on defining the

[19] 1 Cor 1:18-25.

practical justification for expository preaching. If one is neither biblically nor theologically convinced that this is the best approach to the preaching ministry, then he will like the practical justification to be asserted even less. If we are to abandon modern pragmatism and be consistent, then we must turn to Scripture for the practical justification for expository preaching as well. II Peter 1:3-4 gives us the practical justification for expository preaching:

> "…seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence . For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence , and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them,* and have been established in the truth which is present with *you."*[20]

Romans 8:29 gives us the general practical result for which we are looking: "…He also predestined (us) *to become* conformed to the image of His Son." Peter breaks it down into two practical elements: (1) "His divine power (Holy Spirit) has granted to us everything pertaining to life;" and (2) "godliness." How is this accomplished? "Through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own grace and excellence." What specifically is the true knowledge of Him? We are to declare "His magnificent promises." This is where the payoff comes; this is the practical justification for which we are looking. By these promises being proclaimed we "become partakers of the divine nature

[20] 2 Pet 1:3-12.

(conformed to the image of Christ), having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." The remainder of this passage adds further to the practical result we are looking for and ends with the preacher's job description: "Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you" (I Peter 1:12).

The state of preaching today is one which causes both alarm and hope in me. On the one hand, our culture has reentered the Dark Ages where biblical literacy and general awareness of the principles of God are waning exponentially. It reminds me of the "nothing" which swept through the universe and caused great bewilderment and panic in Michael Ende's book *The Neverending Story*. There is a biblical nothingness that is sweeping through our current generation and its void leaves us on the verge of panic. In his book, *Famine in the Land*, Steven Lawson speaks to this condition, "The prophet Amos warned of a famine that would cover the land, a dearth of hearing the Word of the Lord (Amos 8:11)... Indeed we are living in such days of drought, a time when many forces are suffocating biblical preaching. Now, more than ever, pastors must return to their highest calling, the divine summons to "preach the Word" (II Timothy 4:2)."[21]

My alarm is twofold. First, as stated, we are witnessing a great vacuuming of the Word of God from our culture. This void drives people to frantically search for meaning. The enemy is all too willing to offer his deceptive fill. Second, and most distressing, our pulpits are becoming both cause and effect in this vacuity. Our previous generation of preachers, believing that "meeting felt needs" and homiletic therapy was the way to fill churches and satisfy the demands of the people, raised up this generation of preachers

[21] Steven J. Lawson, *Famine in the Land* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 17, 18.

who are ministerially and philosophically secular and biblically illiterate; and therefore spiritually naïve. These certainly are the days "…when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths (2 Tim 4:3-4)."

My hope is found in Christ alone and His promise regarding His Word. I am to keep preaching the full counsel of His Word, keep doing the work of an evangelist and never be ashamed of His gospel. His Word will not return void and will always accomplish His intended purpose. The Scriptures in concert with God's Holy Spirit have the power to reveal sin, righteousness and judgment. In the midst of darkness I see the beginnings of revival of God's Word in many pulpits. Whereas there are still overwhelming numbers of those who do not believe and therefore will not preach it, there are countless men who are discovering that the emperor of the modern church growth and human potential movements is naked and they are returning to or coming for the first time to expository preaching as the only means of growing their church and discipling their people. My optimism is not based upon the condition of expository preaching presently but upon the Word of God which will never change nor become irrelevant. As the fads and programs which promise so much and deliver so little pass away, the Word of God will remain forever.

STATE OF ALABAMA
COUNTY OF BALDWIN

BYLAWS
of
GRACE FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.

ARTICLE I
Location of Offices

The name of this Corporation is Grace Fellowship Baptist Church. It is an Alabama nonprofit religious Corporation with its principal offices in Robertsdale, Alabama.

ARTICLE II
Purpose

This Corporation is organized for exclusively religious purposes (including charitable and eleemosynary purposes common to a pastoral church ministry as defined by Scripture). Our commission is summarized as follows: "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'" (Matthew 28:18-20).

This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities. This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

1. Worshipping Him;

2. Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;

3. Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture;

4. Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work, local, domestic, and international;

5. Administering the ordinances of baptism and communion;

6. Encouraging Biblical fellowship among believers;

7. Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ; and

8. Calling fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity through instruction and encouragement about the nature of the local church.

ARTICLE III
Corporate Membership

Section 1. Corporate Members:

The Corporation shall have no members. Any action which would otherwise require approval by a majority of all members shall only require approval of the Board of Elders. All rights which would otherwise vest in the members shall vest in the Board of Elders.

Section 2. Members of the Fellowship:

Nothing contained in Section 1 of this Article shall be construed to limit the right of the Corporation to refer to persons associated with the Corporation as 'members' even though such persons are not corporate members, and no such reference in or outside of these Bylaws shall constitute anyone being a member, within the meaning of Section 10-3A-26 of the Alabama Nonprofit Corporation Law. The Corporation may confer by amendment of its Articles or of these Bylaws some or all of the rights of a member, as set forth in the Alabama Nonprofit Corporation Law, upon any person or persons who do not have the right to vote for the election of officers or on a disposition of substantially all of the assets of the Corporation or on a merger or on a dissolution or on changes to the Corporation's Articles or Bylaws, but no such person shall be a member within the meaning of Section 10-3A-26.

ARTICLE IV
Church Membership

Section 1. Purpose of the Fellowship:

The congregation of Christian believers who have applied for membership and have been duly accepted shall constitute a spiritual body, united for the spiritual purposes set forth in the Articles of Incorporation at Article III, and in Article II of these Bylaws.

Section 2. Active Membership:

Active membership in the Grace Fellowship Baptist Church shall be open to all persons who confess Christ as their Lord and Savior and who have been baptized.

Section 3. Voting Privileges:

Membership in this church shall not vest in any member any proprietary rights in the Corporation, but shall only entitle the member to vote at a meeting of the members on those matters that the Board of Elders chooses to submit to the church membership for affirmation. In such cases, voting privileges are restricted to members who are in good standing, who are not under any disciplinary action, and who have passed their sixteenth (16) birthdays. Membership shall not be assignable inter vivos by any member nor shall membership vest to any personal representative, heir, or devisee.

Section 4. Applications for Membership

All requests for membership shall be made to a Pastor, Elder, or Deacon. Upon making such a request, the person shall be given an application for membership, along with a copy of the Doctrinal Statement, Church Covenant and a copy of the Bylaws. A Pastor, Elder, Deacon or appointed designated counselor shall meet with the applicant following receipt of the application. Each applicant shall assent to the Doctrinal Statement and subscribe to the Bylaws.

Section 5. Denial of Membership

If, upon review of an application for membership or after meeting with a prospective member, the Board of Elders determines that the applicant does not confess Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior, or that there is a lack of evidence of a godly lifestyle, membership shall be denied. The decision made by the Board shall be final and there shall be no appeal to any court from that decision.

Section 6. Admission of Applicants

Applicants admitted to membership shall, if possible, present themselves at a worship service designated by the Pastor-Teacher and Board of Elders, at which service such applicants shall publicly affirm their membership commitment and be publicly acknowledged as members.

Section 7. Responsibilities of Members

Members shall seek to exercise their spiritual gifts for the mutual benefit of all the church body and shall submit to the loving rule of the Elders.

Section 8. Church Discipline

(a) The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1).

(b) Members of this church and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture as determined by the Board of Elders, shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18. Before such dismissal, however,

(1) it shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring individual's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct such erring individual in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If the erring individual does not heed this warning, then

(2) the warning member shall again go to the erring individual, seeking his or her repentance, but accompanied by one or two individuals who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent. The first and second warnings may occur with no specified time interval. If the erring individual still refuses to heed this warning, then

(3) it shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Board). If the Board of Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Board) determines—after thorough investigation in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Timothy 5:19—that there is corroborating evidence that the erring individual has sinned or is continuing to sin, that he or she has been appropriately confronted, and that he or she has refused to repent, then the Elders shall inform the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly-scheduled worship service in order that the church may call the erring individual to repentance. If the erring individual demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect may be given at a regularly-scheduled worship service. If, however, the erring individual does not repent in response to the church in its collective call to repentance, then

(4) he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the fellowship and/or membership of the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service. If the erring individual, after such dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement before the Board of Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Board), then he or she shall be publicly restored to all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of fellowship and/or membership.

(c) Notwithstanding the foregoing, the elders in the exercise of their discretion may proceed directly to the third stage of church discipline, (i.e. the informing of the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service in order that the church may call the erring individual to repentance) or to the fourth stage of church discipline, (i.e. the dismissal from the fellowship and/or membership of the church) when one or more of the following have occurred;

(i) Where the transgression and the refusal to repent have been public, i.e. openly and to the offense of the whole Church (1 Cor. 5:1-5);

(ii) Where the disciplined party has taught or otherwise disseminated doctrine deemed false or erroneous by the elders, then chosen to disregard the direction and reproof of the elders (Romans 16:17); or

(iii) Where the disciplined party has been warned twice to cease from factious and divisive conduct and has chosen to disregard that warning (Titus 3:10-11).

(d) The members of this church, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church, agree that there shall be no appeal to any court because of the dismissal or because of public statements to the congregation at the third or fourth stages of church discipline. Members, who are under discipline by the church, as defined in the previous paragraphs, forfeit and waive the right to resign from this church. Resignations from membership are possible only by members who are in good standing and who are not under any disciplinary action.

(e) Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion and approval of the elders (or a duly constituted subcommittee thereof), a member, non-member regular attendee, or other individual may be notified that he or she is not to be present upon church premises for such a period of time as is deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of others on church premises. Such required absence may, but need not, be concurrent with church discipline of that person.

(f) Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion and approval of the elders (or a duly constituted subcommittee thereof), the names of any members who have not attended a worship

service, Sunday School class session or Fellowship Group meeting at Grace Fellowship Baptist Church for a period of six months or longer may be removed from the membership rolls.

Section 9. Worship Meetings

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.

Section 10. Regular Meetings

A regular annual meeting of the church members shall be held at the principal meeting place of the church (as the same shall be from time to time designated in the minutes of the Board) in January of each year. At such regular annual meeting, the members shall consider reports of the affairs of the Corporation, and transact such other business as the Elders determine shall be brought before the meeting, including but not limited to affirmation of the appointments made by the Elders of those who shall serve as Elders for the ensuing year and the election of those qualified in the offices of Deacons.

Section 11. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the members may be called at any time by order of the Pastor-Teacher, the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Board of Elders, or by a quorum of the members of the Board of Elders.

Section 12. Notice of Meetings

Notice of regular meetings shall be given from the pulpit by the Pastor for two successive Sundays prior to the meeting. In addition thereto, notice shall be published in the regular church bulletin for two successive Sundays prior to such meeting. Notice of special meetings shall be given from the pulpit at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting and shall also be published in the regular church bulletin on the Sunday immediately preceding the meeting.

Section 13. Quorum

At all meetings of the members, whether regular, special or adjourned, the members present shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 14. Voting Rights

Those admitted to church membership do not constitute a legislative body, nor do they constitute members of the Corporation, and they cannot vote, pass resolutions binding upon the Corporation, nor shall they have any equity in the real property of the Corporation, or rights to vote on its disposal. Said property of the Corporation is dedicated to religious and charitable purposes as outlined in the Articles of Incorporation.

ARTICLE V
Elders

Section 1. Powers

Subject to the limitations of the Articles and these Bylaws and of pertinent restrictions of the Corporation Code of the State of Alabama, all the activities and affairs of the Corporation shall be exercised by or under the direction of the Board of Elders, who are responsible for shepherding and having oversight of the flock. Without prejudice to such general powers, but subject to these same limitations, it is hereby expressly declared that the Board shall have the following powers in addition to the other powers enumerated by these Bylaws:

(a) To select and remove all the officers, agents, pastors, staff, and employees of the Corporation; prescribe such duties for them consistent with the Scriptures, with law, with the Articles of Incorporation, or with these Bylaws; and fix the terms of their offices and their compensation.

(b) To make such disbursements from the funds and properties of the Corporation as are required to fulfill the purposes of this Corporation as are more fully set out in the Articles of Incorporation, thereof and generally to conduct, manage, and control the activities and affairs of the Corporation and to make such rules and regulations consistent with the Scriptures, with law, with the Articles of Incorporation, or with these Bylaws, as they may deem best.

(c) To adopt, make and use a corporate seal, and to alter such seal from time to time as they may deem best.

(d) To establish policies and practices for the church consistent with the purposes of this Corporation.

(e) To assist the Pastor-Teacher in the administration of the ordinances of baptism and Communion.

(f) To borrow money and incur indebtedness for the purposes of the Corporation and to cause to be executed and delivered, in the corporate name, promissory notes, bonds, debentures, deeds of trust, mortgages, pledges, hypothecations, or other evidences of debt and securities.

(g) To carry on a business and apply any profit that results from business activity in which it may legally engage.

Section 2. Number of Elders

In accordance with the provisions of Section 10-3A-35 of the Alabama Nonprofit Corporation Law, the authorized number of directors of the Corporation shall not be less than three (3) until changed by an amendment to the Articles of Incorporation or by an amendment to these Bylaws.

Section 3. Nomination, Selection, and Tenure of Office

Recommendations to fill the office of Elder shall be requested once a year from all church members. A Nominating Committee consisting of not less than two members of the pastoral staff and or elders shall be appointed by the Board of Elders who will also designate a chairman of the committee. This committee shall review all nominations and determine each nominee's qualifications. A proposed slate of nominees prepared by the nominating committee shall then be submitted to the Board of Elders, along with any relevant comments.

Section 4. Qualifications

Each member of the Board of Elders must be an active member of this church and possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. He shall be:

(a) Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7)

(b) Husband of one wife; a one-woman man (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)

(c) Temperate, sober, vigilant (1 Timothy 3:2)

(d) Sober-minded, prudent (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)

(e) Of good behavior; orderly, respectable (1 Timothy 3:2)

(f) Given to hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)

(g) Apt to teach; able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9)

(h) Not given to wine (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)

(i) Not violent; not pugnacious (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)

(j) Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle (1 Timothy 3:3)

(k) Not a brawler; uncontentious; not soon angry or quick-tempered (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)

(l) Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of base gain (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)

(m) Rules well his own house; his children are faithful, not accused of rebellion to God (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:7)

(n) Not a novice; not a new convert (1 Timothy 3:6)

(o) Has a good report or reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7)

(p) Not self-willed (Titus 1:7)

(q) A lover of good men and things (Titus 1:8)

(r) Just, fair (Titus 1:8)

(s) Holy, devout (Titus 1:8)

(t) Self-controlled (Titus 1:8)

Section 5. Vacancies

Subject to the provision of Section 10-3A-36 of the Alabama Nonprofit Corporation Law, any Elder may resign effective upon giving written notice to the Chairman of the Board or the Secretary of the Board, unless the notice specifies a later time for the effectiveness of such resignation. If the resignation is to take effect at some future time, a successor may be selected before that time.

A vacancy or vacancies in the Board shall be deemed to exist in case of the death, resignation, or removal of any Elder, or if a need exists and the specified limit is not exceeded.

No reduction of the authorized number of Elders shall have the effect of removing any Elder prior to the expiration of the Elder's term of office.

Section 6. Removal of Elders

Any Elder may be removed from office at any regular or special meeting of the Board if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated or spiritually unqualified (according to pertinent Scripture, including 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9), after thorough corroborating investigation by the Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Board), in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:19. When an Elder is removed because of sin that is deemed sufficient to disqualify him from shepherding, and if he refuses to repent from that sin, the removal shall be accompanied by a public rebuke, and notice shall be made before the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly-scheduled worship service as prescribed in 1 Timothy 5:20.

Section 7. Place of Meetings

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary provided in these Bylaws, any meeting (whether regular, special, or adjourned) of the Board of Elders of the Corporation may be held at any place within or without the State of Alabama.

Section 8. Regular Meetings

Regular monthly meetings of the Board shall be held without call or notice on the second Tuesday after the first Sunday of each month, unless otherwise modified by the Board. Regular meetings shall be open to church members, but special or executive sessions will be closed.

Section 9. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the Board of Elders may be called at any time by order of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman or the Secretary of the Board of Elders or by a quorum of the members of the Board of Elders.

Section 10. Notice of Special Meetings

In accordance with the provisions of Section 10-3A-39 of the Alabama Non-profit Corporation Law, special meetings of the Board shall be held upon four days notice by first-class mail or a forty-eight-hour notice given personally or by telephone or other similar means of communication. Any such notice shall be addressed or delivered to each Elder or at such Elder's address as it is shown upon the records of the Corporation or as may have been given to the Corporation by the Elder for such purpose of notice.

Section 11. Quorum

Except as otherwise provided herein, a majority of the Elders currently serving shall constitute a quorum except when a vacancy or vacancies prevents such majority, whereupon a majority of the Elders in office shall constitute a quorum, provided such majority shall constitute either one-third of the authorized number of Elders or at least two Elders, whichever is larger, or unless the authorized number of Elders is only one. A majority of the Elders present, whether or not a quorum is present, may adjourn any meeting to another time and place. Whenever the matter to be considered concerns calling or dismissing a pastor, or buying or selling real estate, a quorum shall consist of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Board. Whenever the matter to be considered is of a nature to require action by Lay Elders only, a majority of the Lay Elders currently serving shall constitute a quorum. Except as the Articles of Incorporation, these Bylaws and the Alabama Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law may provide, the act or decision done or made by the Elders present at a meeting duly held at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the Board of Elders.

Section 12. Participation in Meetings by Conference Telephone

Members of the Board may participate in a meeting through use of conference telephone or similar communications equipment, so long as all members participating in such meeting can hear one another.

Section 13. Adjournment

A majority of the Elders present, whether or not a quorum is present, may adjourn any Elders' meeting to another time and place. Notice of the time and place of holding an adjourned meeting need not be given to absent Elders if the time and place be fixed at the meeting adjourned, except as provided in the next sentence. If the meeting is adjourned for more than forty-eight (48) hours, notice of any adjournment to another time or place shall be given prior to the time of the adjourned meeting to the Elders who were not present at the time of the adjournment.

Section 14. Action Without Meeting

Any action required or permitted to be taken by the Board may be taken without a meeting if all members of the Board shall individually or collectively consent in writing to a duly prepared resolution to such action. Such consent or consents shall have the same effect as a unanimous vote of the Board and shall be documented by attaching the signed resolution with the minutes of proceedings of the Board.

Section 15. Rights of Inspection

In accordance with the provisions of Section 10-3A-43 of the Alabama Non-profit Corporation Law, every Elder shall have the absolute right at any reasonable time to inspect and copy all books, records, and documents of every kind and to inspect the physical properties of the Corporation of which such person is an Elder, for a purpose reasonably related to such person's interest as an Elder.

Section 16. Decisions of the Board of Elders

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration by unanimous vote in a spirit of humility, with each Elder regarding one another before himself.

Section 17. Committees

Committees of the Board may be appointed by resolution passed by a majority of the whole Board. Committees shall be composed of two or more members of the Board and shall have such powers of the Board as may be expressly delegated to it by resolution of the Board of Elders, except with respect to:

(a) The approval of any action for which the Alabama Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law also requires member's approval (must be approved by the Board as a whole).

(b) The filling of vacancies on the Board or on any committee.

(c) The amendment or repeal of Bylaws or the adoption of new Bylaws.

(d) The amendment or repeal of any resolution of the Board which by its express terms is not so amendable or repealable.

(e) The appointment of other committees of the Board or the members thereof.

(f) The approval of any self-dealing transaction.

The Board shall have the power to prescribe the manner in which proceedings of any such committee shall be conducted. In the absence of any such prescription, such committee shall have the power to prescribe the manner in which its proceedings shall be conducted. Unless the Board or such committee shall otherwise provide, the regular and special meetings and other actions of any such committee shall be governed by the provision of this Article applicable to meetings and actions of the Board. Minutes shall be kept of each meeting of each committee.

Section 18. Fees and Compensation

Elders (as such) shall not receive any stated or fixed salary for their services; however, nothing herein contained shall be construed to preclude any Elders from serving the Corporation in any other capacity and receiving compensation. Any person receiving compensation directly or indirectly from Grace Fellowship Baptist Church shall not be in a position to determine the nature or amount of said compensation.

ARTICLE VI
Other Councils and Committees

Section 1. Councils and Committees

To promote efficient handling of Board matters, the Board may appoint various councils and committees from within its membership, the staff, and from the church at large. These councils and committees shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and with powers specifically delegated by the Board. The general functions of councils and committees are:

(a) To bring considered recommendations to the Board concerning ministries.

(b) To provide a wider base of counsel to the Elders having the oversight of specific ministries.

All councils and committees shall exist for the period specified by the Board.

Section 2. Deacons

The Deacons shall consist of members possessing the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and shall be nominated by members of the church. The Board of Elders will compile and confirm the nominations and submit the names to the members for affirmation at the annual meeting. The Deacons shall serve for an indefinite

period, but with an annual reaffirmation by the membership. The Deacons shall assist the Elders in the shepherding of the saints, assist the Pastor at Communion and baptismal services, aid in the general spiritual care of the church, and perform other duties as assigned by the Board of Elders.

A Deacon shall be a man of dignity, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not fond of sordid gain, holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, first tested and found above reproach.

Section 3. Nomination and Selection

The nomination and selection of Deacons shall be done in the same manner as for Elders, as set forth in Article V, Section 3 of these Bylaws, except they shall be affirmed at the annual meeting by the members of the church.

Section 4. Vacancies

In the event any of the above-mentioned offices becomes vacant during the period between annual elections, the Board of Elders may fill such vacancy for the unexpired term.

ARTICLE VII
Officers

Section 1. Officers

The officers of the Corporation shall be a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. The Corporation may also have, at the discretion of the Board of Elders, other officers as may be appointed in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of this article.

Section 2. Election

The officers of the Corporation, except such officers as may be appointed in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 or Section 5 of this Article, shall be chosen annually by, and shall serve at, the pleasure of the Board of Elders. Each officer shall hold his office until he shall resign, be removed, or become otherwise disqualified to serve, or until his successor shall be elected and qualified.

Section 3. Subordinate Officers

The Board of Elders may appoint, and may empower the Chairman to appoint, such other officers as the business of the Corporation may require, each of whom shall hold office for such period, have such authority, and perform such duties as are provided in the Bylaws or as the Board of Elders may from time to time determine.

Section 4. Removal and Resignation

Any officer may be removed upon disqualification and removal as an Elder per Article VI, Section 6 of these Bylaws. In accordance with the provisions of Section 10-3A-35 of the Alabama Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law, any officer may resign at any time without prejudice to the rights, if any, of the Corporation under any contract to which the officer is a party, by giving written notice to the Board of Elders, or to the Chairman, or to the Secretary of the Corporation. Any such resignation shall take effect at the date of the receipt of such notice or at any later time specified therein; and, unless otherwise specified therein, the acceptance of such resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective.

Section 5. Vacancies

A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or any other cause shall be filled in the manner prescribed in the Bylaws for regular election or appointment to such office, provided that such vacancies shall be filled as they occur and not on an annual basis.

Section 6. Inability to Act

In the case of absence or inability to act of any officer of the Corporation and of any person herein authorized to act in his place, the Board of Elders may from time to time delegate the powers or duties of such officer to any other officer or other person whom the Board may select.

Section 7. The Chairman

The Chairman shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation and shall, subject to the control of the Board of Elders, have general supervision, direction, and control of the activities and officers of the Corporation. He shall assist the Pastor-Teacher at all meetings of the Board of Elders, which are to be conducted according to the scriptural principles such as set forth in Philippians 2:2-8. He shall be an ex officio member of all the standing committees, if any, and shall have powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Elders or the Bylaws.

Section 8. Vice-Chairman

In the absence or disability of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman shall perform all the duties of the Chairman, and when so acting shall have all the powers of, and be subject to all the restrictions upon, the Chairman. The Vice-Chairman shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as from time to time may be prescribed for him by the Board of Elders or the Bylaws.

Section 9. Secretary

The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept, a book of minutes at the principal office or such other place as the Board of Elders may order, of all meetings of the members, the Board and its committees, with the time and place of holding, whether regular or special, and if special, how authorized, the notice thereof given, the names of those present at the meetings, the Board and committees' meetings, and the proceedings thereof. The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept, at the principal office in the State of Alabama, the original and a copy of the Corporation's Articles and Bylaws, as amended to date.

The Secretary shall give, or cause to be given, notice of all meetings of the Board and any committees thereof required by these Bylaws or by law to be given, shall keep the seal of the Corporation in safe custody, and shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as prescribed by the Board.

The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept at the principal office of the Corporation, a church membership register, or a duplicated membership register, showing the names of the members and their addresses.

Section 10. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall ensure the stewardship of the physical and financial resources of the Corporation, "taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration…for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Corinthians 8:20-21). He shall select "men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3) to implement and accomplish this responsibility.

The Treasurer shall ensure that all financial activities and transactions are consistent with Articles I, II, III, VI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, and XVII of these Bylaws as well as Section10-3A-20 of the Alabama Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law.

The Treasurer shall keep and maintain, or cause to be kept and maintained, adequate and correct accounts of the properties and business transactions of the Corporation. The books of account shall at all reasonable times be open to inspection by any Elder as provided in Section 10-3A-43 of the Alabama Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law.

The Treasurer shall deposit, or cause to be deposited, all monies and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the Corporation with such depositories as may be designated by the Board of Elders. He shall disburse, or cause to be disbursed, the funds of the Corporation as may be ordered by the Board of Elders, shall render, or cause to be rendered, to the Chairman and the Elders, whenever they request it, an account of all the transactions and of the financial condition of the Corporation, and shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Elders. He shall make, or cause to be made, the financial reports at each regular Board meeting and at the annual meeting of members.

ARTICLE VIII
Ordination, Licensing, and Commissioning

Section 1. Ordination

Ordination refers to the unanimous recognition by the Board of Elders of a man's call to the ministry, preparation as a shepherd, and qualification to serve. Ordination shall be conferred for life, so long as the man continues to manifest the qualifications of the office.

Section 2. Licensing

The license is issued by the Board of Elders and is given in recognition of a man's call to that ministry. Its aim is to allow a man to perform the ecclesiastical duties and functions of the church.

Section 3. Commissioning

When local-church certification is required for ministry where ordination would be unnecessary or inappropriate, a person is commissioned by the Board of Elders to minister. This authorization continues as long as the opportunity to minister remains in effect and as long as the person maintains the qualifications for ministry.

ARTICLE IX
The Pastor-Teacher

Section 1. Election

The Pastor-Teacher shall be selected by the Board and confirmed by the members of the church at its annual meeting or at a special business meeting, and such confirmation shall be a three-fourths (3/4) majority of all the votes cast. He shall remain in office an indefinite period of time subject to the following reservations: The Elders reserve the right to dismiss the Pastor-Teacher upon giving him one month's written notice of its intention to dismiss. The Pastor-Teacher must give one month's notice if he intends to resign. The time limit of a Pastor-Teacher's resignation or dismissal is subject to a lesser time if both the Pastor-Teacher and the church by mutual agreement provide otherwise.

Section 2. Duties

The Pastor-Teacher shall be an elder and he shall be responsible to the Board of Elders. The Pastor-Teacher shall be an ex officio member of all councils and committees. The Pastor-Teacher shall arrange for and conduct all public and regular services of the church and shall be responsible for general oversight of the spiritual welfare of the church. In the absence of the Pastor-Teacher, the Board of Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Board), shall be responsible to arrange for the public and regular services of the church.

ARTICLE X
Settlement of Disputes

Section 1. General

In any dispute arising between church members, pastors, or staff pertaining to any matter of spiritual teaching or practices, church finances, title to property purchased with church contributions, or formally adopted documents, the dispute shall be resolved by the Board of Elders of the church (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Board). A decision shall be reached after prayerful consideration, in a spirit of humility, with each Elder regarding one another before himself and striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3).

ARTICLE XI
Other Provisions

Section 1. Endorsement of Documents, Contracts

The Board of Elders, except as in the Bylaws otherwise provided, may authorize any officer or officers, agent or agents, to enter into any contract or execute any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the Corporation. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless so authorized by the Board of Elders, no officer, agent or employee shall have any power or authority to bind the Corporation by any contract or agreement, or to pledge its credit, or to render it liable for any purpose or to any amount.

Subject to the provisions of applicable law, any note, mortgage, evidence of indebtedness, contract, conveyance, or other instrument in writing and any assignment or endorsement thereof executed or entered into between this Corporation and any other person, when signed jointly by two elders of this Corporation shall be valid and binding on this Corporation in the absence of actual knowledge on the part of the other person that the signing officers had no authority to execute the same.

Section 2. Representation of Shares of Other Corporations

The Chairman or any other officer or officers authorized by the Board are each authorized to vote, represent, and exercise on behalf of the Corporation all rights incident to any and all shares of any other Corporation or corporations standing in the name of the Corporation. The authority herein granted may be exercised either by any such officer in person or by any other person authorized to do so in proxy or power of attorney duly executed by said officer.

Section 3. Construction and Definitions

Unless the context otherwise requires, the general provisions, rules of construction and definitions contained in the general provisions of the Alabama Nonprofit Corporation Law shall govern the construction of these Bylaws.

Section 4. Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended and new and additional Bylaws may be made from time to time at any time by the Board of Elders in the exercise of the power granted to said Board of Elders in these Bylaws.

Section 5. Record of Amendments

Whenever an amendment or new Bylaw is adopted, it shall be copied in the book of minutes with the original Bylaws, in the appropriate place. If any Bylaw is repealed, the fact of repeal with the date of the meeting at which the repeal was enacted or written assent was filed shall be stated in said book.

ARTICLE XII
Receipt, Investment, and, Disbursement of Funds

Section 1.

The Corporation shall receive all monies or other properties transferred to it for the purposes for which the Corporation was formed (as shown by the Articles of Incorporation). However, nothing contained herein shall require the Board of Elders to accept or receive any money or property of any kind if it shall determine in its discretion that receipt of such money or property is contrary to the expressed purposes of the Corporation as shown by said Articles.

Section 2.

The Corporation shall hold, manage, and disburse any funds or properties received by it from any source in a manner that is consistent with the expressed purposes of this Corporation.

ARTICLE XIII
Corporate Records and Reports

Section 1. Records

The Corporation shall maintain adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of its business and properties. All such books, records, and accounts shall be kept at its principal place of business in the State of Alabama, as fixed by the Board of Elders from time to time.

Section 2. Inspection of Books and Records

Every Elder shall have the absolute right at any reasonable time to inspect all books, records, documents of every kind, and the physical properties of the Corporation, and also of its subsidiary organizations, if any.

Section 3. Fiscal Year of the Corporation

The fiscal year of the Corporation shall begin on the first day of January and end on the last day of December in each year.

ARTICLE XIV
Dissolution

Upon dissolution of this Corporation, the Board of Elders shall cause the assets herein to be distributed to another Corporation with purposes similar to that identified in Article II of these Bylaws and Article II of the Articles of Incorporation as amended.

ARTICLE XV

Miscellaneous Provisions

Section 1. Instruments in Writing

All checks, drafts, demands for money and notes of the Corporation and all written contracts of the Corporation shall be signed by such officer or officers, agent or agents, as the Board of Elders may from time to time by resolution designate.

ARTICLE XVI
Benefits

The Board of Elders shall appoint, as deemed necessary by the Board, a benefits review committee consisting of three or more members, and their findings shall be presented, whenever requested, to the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE XVII
Indemnification

Any person who is, or was a director, officer, employee or agent of the corporation, or who is or was serving at the request of the corporation as a director, officer, employee or agent of another corporation, partnership, trust or other enterprise may be indemnified by the corporation to the fullest extent allowed by the Alabama Nonprofit Corporation Act against all expenses, actions, suits, judgments, fines, liabilities and claims, and amounts paid in settlement. The Board may authorize the purchase of insurance on behalf of any such person or entity.

Certification by Incorporators

I hereby certify the foregoing as the initial Bylaws of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church, which were adopted by the following on the _____ day of _____, 2007.

_____

Clint Andrews

_____

Leslie Creamer

_____

Wayne Gruenloh

_____

Allan Long

Signature of Affirmation

Separate originally signed copy on file at Grace Fellowship Baptist Church

I, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and with a joyful and humble heart, will submit to the doctrinal statement, church covenant, church constitution, and leadership of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church.

_____ _____

Signature ***Date***

Elders or acting Elders of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church

_____

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_____

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