

Constitution
of
Grace Church
Kalispell, MT

*Proposed at November 18th, 2018 Members Meeting; Revised December 21st, 2018;
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Preamble

To display the supreme worth of His glory, God has chosen to save a people and call them out of the world so that they might assemble themselves together in local congregations or churches (Acts 2:38-41). We, the members of Grace Church, organize ourselves and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance for the goal of bringing glory to Jesus Christ through our shared lives and faith (Jn. 13:34-35).

Article 1: Name

The name of this corporation is Grace Church. Grace Church is a domestic nonprofit religious corporation incorporated on 12/23/02 under the laws of the state of Montana, pursuant to § 35-2-221, MCA. Grace Church shall be operated exclusively for religious purposes as a church with members as defined under the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) of 1986 and corresponding sections of any future Federal Tax Code. Grace Church is automatically exempt from federal income and most other taxes.

Article 2: Purpose

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 seeks to glorify God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

- Worshiping Him by ascribing ultimate value to Him as the Lord of every aspect of our lives;
- Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching, teaching, evangelism, discipleship, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture;
- Equipping the saints through Bible instruction, study, and training;
- Encouraging, supporting, and participating in the mission of making Christ known, locally, domestically, and internationally;
- Administering baptism and communion;
- Encouraging Biblical fellowship among believers in a way that fosters such love among us that we display the reality of Christ's presence to the world;
- Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Article 3: Church Membership

Section 1 – Qualifications

To become a voting member at Grace Church a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized in obedience to Christ, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Statement of Faith, complete a membership class, agree to the commitments expressed in the Membership Handbook, and sign the Membership Covenant.

The practice of the church is to apply the sign of baptism to those who have made a credible profession of their faith in Christ. Yet, we recognize that historically, many Protestant Evangelical churches have practiced infant baptism. As a church, we have great sympathies for those who have been baptized as infants, who display evidences of faith and are growing in grace. The baptisms of these individuals shall be considered, by the elders, on a case by case basis.

The Elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership.

Section 2 – Admission of Members

To be admitted into church membership the names of the qualified applicants shall be made known to the congregation at least 3 consecutive weeks prior to any public recommendation of their membership. The congregation shares the responsibility of ensuring that unresolved relational issues, biblical concerns, or disqualifying behaviors are made known to the Elders.

Having received no such information or having been used of God to restore peace between the parties, the Elders shall approve all candidates and recommend them to the congregation at the next members meeting or a special membership Sunday.

Section 3 – Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties agreed upon in the Membership Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God.

Only those who are members of this congregation shall be entitled to serve in the teaching ministry or as ministry leaders. The Elders will consider temporary exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

Because a limitation of time always exists, pastoral oversight and care are extended to members as the first priority whenever circumstances require such determinations to be made.

As partners in the work of the gospel to which Christ has called us, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend member meetings because member involvement contributes to our unity and the effectiveness of our mission. When the elders call for a public vote it shall require $\frac{3}{4}$ of the members who are present and voting (not of the full number of the membership) in order for the proposal to be affirmed. All such public votes shall be announced in the morning worship service three consecutive Sundays prior to the vote.

Section 4 - Categories of Membership

Active members are those members who attend regularly and are not under church discipline. They are considered to be in good standing. Only active members shall have the privilege to vote and hold church office and participate in all church business and discussions.

Non-resident members are those members who are not able to attend services because they live too far away for a temporary period. This would be applicable to college students, military assignments, or those who reside elsewhere for the majority of the year. They would not be eligible to hold any official offices in the church nor would they be eligible to vote at membership meetings.

Section 5 – Termination of Membership

The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death, upon receiving a voluntary resignation, when they have joined with another gospel preaching church, or by involuntary resignation, as an act of church discipline. Final termination is to be determined by the Elders.

The Elders shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline or for any other biblical reason.

Section 6 - Membership Record and Audit

A record of active and non-resident members of Grace Church shall be kept current in the church office. The Elders have the responsibility to audit the membership records annually.

Section 7 - Discipline and Restoration of a Member

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her Christian duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored or the welfare of the church is compromised shall be subject to the admonition and/or discipline of the Elders according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and the example of Scripture.

Church discipline should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed. Church discipline can include admonition by the Elders, suspension from communion for a definite period, temporary removal from leadership positions, and excommunication (see Matthew 18: 15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3: 14–15; 1 Timothy 5: 19– 20; 1 Corinthians 5: 4–5).

The purpose of such discipline should be for the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined. Our policy about how we deal with conflict is found in our Membership Handbook under the title Peacemaking and Reconciliation.

Article 4: Officers

Section 1 – Summary

The offices of Grace Church are the Biblical offices of Elders and Deacons. All officers, with the exception of newly called pastors, must be members of this church for a minimum of one year before assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2 – Elders

The Elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of Elder set forth in I Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9. Qualified men shall also affirm the church’s statement on Gender, Sexuality and Marriage. No Elder shall also hold the office of Deacon during his tenure.

The Elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1–6 and I Peter 5:1–4, the Elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God’s flock.

The Elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members; develop, examine, and approve all prospective candidates for offices and positions; oversee the work of the Deacons and staff; conduct worship services; administer baptism and communion; equip the membership for the work of the ministry; encourage sound doctrine and practice; admonish and correct error; oversee the process of church discipline; coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church into mission.

The Elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share the fundamental convictions and beliefs of this church. The Elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The Elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to a staff member.

The Elders shall also formulate position papers and establish policies or practices as needed to protect the mission and clarify the doctrine of Grace Church. It shall be the responsibility of the Elders to ensure that such documents are consistent with the stated fundamental convictions and beliefs of this church, rooted in Scripture, and presented in a way that fosters unity among the members.

Each year the Elders, after consultation with the Deacons and the staff, shall present to the church an itemized budget at the annual business meeting. The first membership meeting of the new fiscal year shall be designated as the annual business meeting.

Elders shall serve a term of 3 years. They may serve 2 consecutive terms and then may not be re-nominated for one year. It is wise leadership for them to provide for periods of time away from their work. Apart from term expiration, an Elder’s service may be ended by death, disqualification, resignation, or removal by the Elders.

An Elder who no longer meets the scriptural and personal qualifications for the office or whose relationship with the congregation or the other Elders makes his effective functioning impossible or hampers the work of Christ in the church shall be asked to resign with a 2/3 vote of the remainder of the Eldership.

Any two members of this body with reason to believe that an Elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the Elders. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and I Timothy 5:17–21.

Section 3 – The Senior Pastor

The senior pastor shall be an Elder. He shall not be subjected to the term limits of other elders, but shall remain an elder for so long as he serves in this position. He shall perform the duties of an Elder described in Section 2 above, shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time

ministry of preaching and teaching. He shall bear the primary responsibilities associated with preaching, the oversight of the worship services, the administration of Christian baptism and communion, and performance of other duties as usually pertain to that office. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor the Elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

Section 4 – Associate Pastors

Additional pastors may be called whose relationship to the senior pastor is that of associate. The associate pastor shall be an Elder. He shall not be subjected to the term limits of other elders, but shall remain an elder for so long as he serves in this position. He shall perform the duties of an Elder described in Section 2 above and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the ministry of preaching and teaching. He shall assist the senior pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor or which may be specifically assigned to him by the Elders. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness) the associate pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the Elders.

Section 5 – Deacons

The office of Deacon is described in I Timothy 3:8–13 and Acts 6:1–7. In addition to these Biblical qualifications Deacons shall also affirm our policy on Gender, Sexuality and Marriage. The church shall recognize those who are giving of themselves in service to the church and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as Deacons.

Deacons shall not form a second deliberative or decision-making body within the congregation but shall be appointed to lead task-specific ministries. They shall serve the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, encourage and support those able to help others, and those with gifts of administration.

The Deacons shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence (The Deacons Fund). They shall also report on its use to the Elders at their request and report to the church its total receipts and total disbursements at the annual business meeting.

At the request of the Elders nominations for qualified Deacons shall come from the membership. Deacons shall use their gifts to provide for ministry needs as identified by the Elders. Deacons shall serve a term of 3 years. They may serve 2 consecutive terms and then may not be re-nominated for one year. It is wise leadership for them to provide for periods of time away from their work. Apart from term expiration, a Deacon's service may be ended by death, disqualification, resignation, or removal by the Elders.

A Deacon who no longer meets the scriptural and personal qualifications for the office or whose relationship with the congregation or the other Deacons makes his effective functioning impossible or hampers the work of Christ in the church shall be asked to resign with a 2/3 vote of the Elders.

Article 5: Dispute Resolution

The Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matthew 18: 15–20, I Corinthians 6: 1–8). Therefore, the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to Biblically based principles (expressed in our Membership Commitments) without reliance on the secular

courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of Biblically based principles to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church regardless of religious affiliation.

Article 6: Amendments

Amendments to The Statement of Faith and Membership Covenant or this Constitution may be proposed by the Elders at any members meeting. The proposed amendments shall be adopted by a 3/4 vote of the members present and voting provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing and have been announced in the morning worship service 3 consecutive Sundays prior to such vote.

Article 7: Inurement and Dissolution

The church is organized for the benefit of many and is not beholden to any private interests. None of the earnings of the church inure to any private shareholder or individual.

After seeking the input of the membership and determining it is in the best interest of the congregation, the remaining Elders may choose to dissolve this corporation.

In the event of the dissolution of this corporation all debts are to be satisfied. None of its assets or holding shall be divided among the members or other individuals, but shall be irrevocably designated to one or more religious organizations which meet the qualifications described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and which are in agreement with the letter and spirit of the Statement of Faith and who exist for purposes found to be in agreement with those expressed under Article 2.