

The Membership Covenant

As a covenant member of Grace Church, I commit to support the Body:

In Doctrine...

1. To affirm the literal death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and its centrality in the life of the believer for salvation (1 Cor. 15:3-5; Rom. 1:16-17) and sanctification (Col. 1:6-7; Eph. 4:17-24).
 - a. I affirm that salvation comes only through the faith expressed in Christ's substitutionary death on behalf of my sin—taking punishment for my wrongdoing (Is. 53:4-5) and, in turn, granting me His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) so as to assure my right standing with the Father (1 John 2:1) and promise of eternal life (John. 3:16)
 - b. I affirm the essential death of Christ for my separation from the sinful nature (Rom. 6:7) and sealing of the Holy Spirit, who is my aide in practical holiness.
2. To affirm the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16) and their use for man's pursuit of righteousness in Christ (2 Tim. 3:17)

In Community...

3. To serve within the bounds of Grace Church, so as to utilize the giftedness which I have received in Christ (1 Cor. 12:4-11) and to allow the Holy Spirit to establish others through my service (Eph. 4:12).
4. To submit myself to church authority in as much as such leadership is in submission to the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In keeping with biblical directive, any claim or dispute between myself and Grace Church and/or any of its officers shall be settled by mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation of Relational Wisdom 360's Christian Conciliation Service. I expressly waive my right to file a lawsuit in any civil court against the church, except to enforce an arbitration decision.
5. To pursue regular attendance of services at Grace Church including Sunday morning worship (Heb. 10:24-25), Communion (1 Cor. 10:23-26), and generally seeking fellowship with the body of believer's at Greenville Grace.
6. To support the proclamation of the gospel (Phil 4:15), both local and world-wide, through joyful, systematic and sacrificial financial giving (2 Cor 8-9).

In Personal Holiness...

7. To submit to all forms of church discipline in keeping with the Word of God (Matt. 18:15-17), with recognition that such action is for our restoration in Christ (Gal. 6:1).
8. To conduct myself in a manner worthy of the calling I have received in Christ (Eph. 4:1), pursuing the fruit of the Spirit in line with my conversion through the gospel (Gal. 5:23) and avoiding the manner of life in which I formerly walked (Eph. 4:17) and the deeds which accompany the sinful nature (Gal. 5:19-21).
9. To inform the elders of my desire to leave Grace Church so they can join with me in prayer (Acts 6:4) for discernment and assure that necessary reconciliation (if necessary) takes place (Rom 12:18).
10. To quickly and diligently pursue commitment to another biblical, gospel-centered church in the event I leave Grace Church (Heb 10:24-25).

I covenant to the above according to the grace afforded by Christ:

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed name: _____

The Leadership Covenant

In light of the importance of a defined membership, we the elders, covenant to perform the following to the best of our ability in Christ;

1. To shepherd the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:17). This includes the following areas¹;
 - a. To protect the flock from ‘wolves’ (Acts 20:28-31) and/or false teachers who contradict sound doctrine (Tit. 1:9)
 - b. To feed the sheep (John 21:17)—teaching all that Jesus taught (Matt. 28:20), the full counsel of Scripture, so as to pursue right doctrine and ensure the salvation of our hearers (1 Tim. 4:16)
 - c. To lead the sheep by exercising oversight (1 Pet. 5:1-2) concerning people, programs, and resources and their direction for gospel purposes.
 - d. To care for practical needs of the church by overseeing financial assistance to those in need (1 Tim. 5:9-16) praying for, as well anointing (when requested) the sick in times of physical distress (James. 5:14)
 - e. To model and fulfill the qualifications for elders as displayed in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1:5-9.
2. To fulfill, in Christ, all of those issues stated in the membership covenant.
3. To appeal to Scripture, in the event that Scripture and the church covenant would be found in conflict and to amend the covenant in order to eliminate any conflict.
4. In keeping with Biblical directive, any claim or dispute between myself and Grace Church and/or any of its officers shall be settled by mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation of Relational Wisdom 360’s Christian Conciliation Service. I expressly waive my right to file a lawsuit in any civil court against the church, except to enforce an arbitration decision.

Ben Akers

Neal Hans

Jason Kerns

Marco Rankin

Brian Reifsnider

Monty Stump

Danny Wright

(7/3/23)

¹ All areas listed are taken from Alexander Strauch’s *Biblical Eldership*, pgs. 16-31

BY - LAWS
For
GREENVILLE GRACE BRETHERN CHURCH, INC.

Greenville, Ohio.
(UPDATED DRAFT: 1/29/24)

PREAMBLE

“The members of Greenville Grace Brethren Church, Inc hereby adopt the following By-Laws for order within the Fellowship, fully recognizing that such By-Laws are never to supersede the Holy Scriptures.”

ARTICLE I: NAME

1. The name of this church shall be Greenville Grace Brethren Church, Inc. (hereafter “GGBC”)

ARTICLE II: AUTHORITY

1. The primary authority by which GGBC exists is received from God through the Holy Scriptures. Jesus Christ is the head of this church. The Bible—God's written and inspired Word—is the expressed will of Jesus Christ. GGBC recognizes and upholds the obligation of mutual consent and cooperation among Charis Fellowship of churches.
2. The form of leadership authority is Biblical Eldership. Elders are the highest human authority of the church. Elders are men of God called by the Holy Spirit and affirmed by the members of the church, for the purpose of shepherding, overseeing and governing the church, as servants, according to the will of the Lord as given through the Bible.
3. The secondary authority by which this church exists is the laws of the state of Ohio, under which this church is legally organized and incorporated.

ARTICLE III: ELDER LEADERSHIP

1. The qualifications for an elder (also referred to as an overseer) are those set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-3. A man who believes that the Holy Spirit has called him to service as an elder must submit himself to the elders for an examination of his qualifications. Upon the elders' presentation of a prospective elder to the membership of GGBC, the members shall commit themselves to prayer and examination of the qualifications of the prospective elder (1 Timothy 3:10). The period of examination of the prospective elder shall be stated when he is presented to the membership and shall be at least for six Sundays. In considering the qualifications of an elder, the members shall also consider whether they can submit to his shepherding and also pray for his ministry. If any member is hesitant about

the qualifications of a prospective elder, the member should discuss the hesitation with the prospective elder. If not satisfied with qualifications, the member should then discuss the hesitation with the elders to resolve the question.

2. The men who are affirmed for service shall serve collectively as a plurality of leadership known as the elders. The elders shall practice shared leadership wherein the position, authority and responsibility of the elders is distributed equally among all elders, but which also recognizes that various elders have spiritual gifts which differ. Shared leadership should serve the purposes of lightening the work load, providing accountability and bringing various talents to the service of the local church body. There is no stated term of office for an elder; instead, the elder serves so long as he is qualified and feels called to service as an elder.
3. While the elders shall be responsible for the oversight of all matters of church life and practice, they must constantly realize that Christ's presence is with the whole congregation, not just the elders. Therefore, elders should also look to the larger body—their brothers and sisters—for wisdom, counsel, vision, help, and prayer. The goal of the elders, as well as the congregation, should always be to speak and act as a united community. Both the leaders and the led need to appreciate and understand the sacred and dynamic nature of the Spirit-empowered congregation; and the leaders should submit themselves to effectively communicate with and involve the larger body in all major decisions of universal concern and impact. At such times, it is incumbent upon the elders to guide the body through a process wherein the church's voice and affirmation can be heard, and most certainly in areas of unrepentant sin (as outlined in Mat 18:17) and the examining and testing of elders and deacons (as indicated in I Tim 3:10). The elders shall prayerfully consider and evaluate the congregation's voice in these matters before they exercise their God-given responsibility as decision makers and undershepherds in Christ's Body.
4. An elder may terminate his service to the elders by a written resignation to the board of elders. The resignation shall give 30-days-notice of the effective date of the resignation.
5. An elder may be removed from his office if he fails to meet the qualifications necessary for an elder. Lack of qualifications shall be considered by the elders at such time as two or three witnesses bring the allegation in writing to the elders (1 Tim 5:19). Removal is accomplished by unanimous agreement of the non-challenged elders then serving on the board of elders. Removal shall be effective at the time of the decision by the elders. The removal shall be publicly announced to the church (1 Tim 5:20). Care shall be taken to seek restoration of the former elder with the local church. (Gal 6:1).

ARTICLE IV: DEACONS & MINISTRY TEAMS

Scripture clearly teaches that the labor of the church does not fall exclusively to the pastor or elders, but to all who call upon the name of Jesus as their Savior and Lord. This royal priesthood of believers comprising the Body of Christ has all been variously gifted by the Holy Spirit for ministry on behalf of the Body for the common good (I Cor 12:7). It is the revealed will of the Lord that believers are to live out their spiritual endowment in service within the Body as the

Spirit directs (Rom 12: 6-8); as the scripture says, “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms (I Pet 4: 10).

1. Scripture also establishes the office of deacon, to assist the church in areas of ministry administration. The qualifications of a deacon are those set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. If a person believes that the Holy Spirit has called him/her to serve as a deacon, he/she must submit to an examination from the elders. Upon the elders’ presentation of the prospective deacon to the membership of GGBC, the members shall commit themselves to prayer and examination of the prospective deacon (1 Tim 3:10). The period of examination of the prospective deacon shall be stated when he/she is presented to the membership and shall be at least for six Sundays. If any member is hesitant about the qualification of a prospective deacon, the members should discuss the hesitation with the prospective deacon. If not satisfied with qualifications, the member should then discuss the hesitation with the elders to resolve the question.
2. A deacon is not a teaching role, nor is it authoritative over the body. Therefore, the establishment of female deacons does not violate 1 Timothy 2:12. We also see Paul affirm Phoebe as a deacon (word translated “servant” in the ESV is “diakonos.”) Paul affirms the qualifications of women deacons (1 Timothy 3:11). Therefore, GGBC affirms the office of deacon can be filled by men or women.
3. The men and women who serve in the role of deacon will each administrate in a specific area of ministry. They are to establish teams that help them fulfill this purpose and look for ways to encourage and equip others to serving the body. As a collective team, deacons will regularly meet with the elder team for the sake of coordination and communication of ministries.
4. A deacon may terminate his/her service to the congregation by a written request to the board of elders. The resignation shall give 30-days-notice of the effective date of resignation.
5. A deacon may be removed from office if he/she fails to meet the qualifications necessary for a deacon. Lack of qualifications shall be considered by the elders at such a time as two or three witnesses bring the allegation in writing to the elders (1 Tim 5:19). Removal is accomplished by unanimous agreement of the elders. Removal shall be effective at the time of the decision by elders. The removal shall be publicly announced to the church. Care shall be taken to seek any necessary restoration of the former deacon with the local church (Gal 6:1).

Scripture gives no indication that every ministry must be overseen by an elder or administrated by a deacon. Therefore, considering the needs of the Body, the elders shall oversee the establishment of ministry teams and provide opportunity for capably gifted individuals to serve so that the needs of the Body are met. Said ministry teams shall function under the supervision of the elders, and shall report regularly to the elders regarding the progress of the team’s ministry. Some teams shall function as standing committees in that their function is fundamental to the ongoing life of the Body. Other teams will be established on an ad hoc basis fulfilling

specific time limited needs and purposes. In either case the elders shall make every effort to meet the needs of the ministry teams so that their members can exercise their grace gifts in a God honoring manner so that the whole Body may be built up, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ who is our head (Eph 4: 12-13).

In all cases the elders shall facilitate the writing of specific guidelines within which the ministry teams are to function.

ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP

God calls individual believers to live in submission and in mutual interdependency one to another within the context of the local church (Rom 12:5; Eph 5:21). This is in stark contrast to the individualism stressed in today's culture. For the local church to function in a biblical fashion each individual member must serve in a manner as God directs (I Cor 12:18). The local church, as a family, is to live with one another in love, humility, gentleness, and patience. A believer's role in a local body is never to be casual or without Spirit led direction and purpose. Believers, whenever possible, are to seek fellowship within a local body (I Cor 1:10), as there is no scriptural basis for Christians to habitually live outside the authority of the local church or without the mutual interdependency of like-minded believers.

1. Purpose of formal membership:

- Membership identifies one as being in Christ, and in relationship with other particular believers within a specific geographic locale.
- Membership is a formal, public declaration of the believer reporting for duty within a local body, and a testament of their commitment to serve within (and outside) the body for the glory of God.
- Membership is a conscious decision of one's own volition to place one's self under the authority of Christ, the head of the church.
- Membership is a public declaration of the desire to grow spiritually, and a plea to the body of Christ to come along side and nurture one toward the likeness of Christ.
- Membership is the publicly stated commitment to live sacrificially for the encouragement and edification of the body all to the glory of God.

2. Qualifications.

To be accepted into membership of GGBC is to join in a covenant relationship with fellow believers who accept and are committed to all the following beliefs and practices:

- a. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God;
- b. That he/she has accepted Jesus as a personal Savior and is committed to His Lordship;
- c. The he/she will submit to the authority of the Bible as the complete, final, inerrant and inspired revelation of the triune God to man;
- d. That he/she will confess allegiance to Christ through water baptism (while GGBC practices triune immersion, membership may be granted to believers who have undergone other forms of believers baptism);
- e. That he/she signs the GGBC Membership Covenant to affirm their desire to serve in the ministries of GGBC for the glory of God and to commit himself/herself to the

covenants and provisions of the Statement of Faith and the Bylaws of GGBC.

The elders hold sole authority over all membership decisions. A person seeking membership should express their desire to an elder of the church.

3. Responsibilities.

Membership in GGBC is also accompanied with responsibilities. Members are expected to exercise their spiritual gifts for Christian service, as God provides, both for His glory and for the building up of fellow believers. Members are to seek God's enabling grace to maintain Christian love, unity, and order within the fellowship. Members are to diligently care for other members in areas of discipleship, accountability, physical needs and spiritual needs. Members are to faithfully attend the services of the church and to support the work of the church through prayer and through joyful, sacrificial and consistent giving toward the financial needs of the Body.

4. Withdrawal.

A member's name may be withdrawn from the roll of GGBC when a written request is made by said member, but only if that member is in good standing at the time of the request.

5. Dismissal and Reinstatement.

a. Reconciliation. The goal of GGBC is to reconcile and restore members who fail to abide by the Statement of Faith and the By-Laws of GGBC. Fulfilling this goal should be an ongoing process.

b. Lack of participation. When a member fails to give evidence of a vital interest in the church, as demonstrated by a lack of regular participation in activities of GGBC (Heb 10:24-25), the elders will make personal contact with the member for the purpose of restoring regular attendance and participation. If this condition consistently persists for a period of one year, then the member's name may be dropped from the membership of GGBC by action of the elders.

c. Improper conduct. If any member is opposed to any Biblical doctrine, advocates error or divisive teaching, or is found to be living in a manner inconsistent with the Word of God, or otherwise brings shame or disgrace on the Lord and His church, then that member will be contacted according to the teachings of Scripture (Mat 18:15-17; Gal 6:1; and I Cor 5).

d. Restoration. If an individual has repented and desires to again be reunited with the congregation, that individual will meet with the elders to demonstrate the repentance of their sin, their desire to seek forgiveness, and their commitment to follow procedures for restoration of fellowship. The ultimate goal of discipline is to seek repentance and restoration (2 Cor 2:5-11).

ARTICLE VI: MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

As the Scriptures define and direct how Christ leads his Church (Art I.1), we also recognize that the Word of God establishes and defines the structure of the family. As such, GGBC affirms the following:

1. In creating us in His image, like Adam and Eve, God creates us as either male or female, with no mistakes in His design for our life. (Gen 1:26-27; Psa 139:13; Isa 49:1)
2. God established marriage between one man and one woman in the Garden and this standard exists until eternal glory. Marriage is intended as the uniting of one man and one woman until death separates them. (Gen 2:24; Num 23:19; Mal 3:6; Mat 22:30; 1 Cor 7:2; Heb 13:4; Jas 1:17)
3. Sexual relations are designed to be enjoyed only within the structure of the covenant of marriage as defined in Scripture. Sexual sins such as, but not limited to, pornography, lustful thinking, masturbation, premarital sex, homosexual activity and adultery are all sins which require repentance. (Ex 20:14, Matt 5:27-30, 1 Cor 6:9, 1 Tim 1:10).
4. Since sexual relations were given as a gift by God for the purposes of joy, intimacy and procreation, sex within the marriage should never be used as manipulation over a spouse, either in denial or by force, but should be observed as a continuation of love and honor as marriage is presented in Scripture. (1 Cor 7:1-5, Eph 5:22-33)
5. God hates divorce and it was established due to the hardness of mankind's heart. All efforts should be made to restore and reconcile a marriage through confession and repentance. However, Scripture does dictate that if a believer is abandoned by their spouse, they are not bound in the marriage (Mal 2:16; Matt 19:3-9; 1 Cor 7:12-16)
6. God recognizes any marriage between a man and a woman, even if the circumstances entering the marriage may have been sinful. Therefore, GGBC will do all it can to help any existing marriages—as defined in section 2 above—flourish. (Matt 5:31-32; Matt 19:3-9; John 4:16-18)
7. Since the Fall of Man in the Garden we suffer separation, confusion and division from God, from others, and even ourselves. This means the body, spirit and mind of the person may not feel unified or consistent. As “embodied souls living in community,” we affirm the sexuality of a person is defined as their biological sex at birth, as able to be observed by others, and not by the impulses of their mind or spirit. (Gen 1:26-28; Gen 2:18-24; Gen 3:6-13)

As GGBC recognizes the shifting perspectives of society, we will seek to disciple people according to the above affirmations, calling for repentance where necessary, potentially disciplining according to Matthew 18 where repentance does not occur. Though we cannot compel the world to live by the standards of a disciple of Christ, we will seek to use our resources, including our property, only in ways that are consistent with these affirmations.

ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

1. An annual meeting of the membership shall be held before the ninth Sunday of each year, when the annual reports and budget shall be presented, and when such other matters shall be presented to the body of GGBC as the elders may determine to be necessary.
2. Other meetings of the membership may be called from time to time as the elders shall deem necessary.
3. All meetings of the congregation shall be publicly announced during regularly scheduled worship services at least two weeks prior to the meeting of the congregation, and by posting a written notice of the meeting on various bulletin boards within the church building at least

two Sundays prior to the meeting.

4. A total of 25 members present at any duly called meeting of the congregation shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE VIII: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

1. Corporate officers. The elders of GGBC, Inc. shall be recognized as the necessary corporate officers of the corporation. The elders shall designate such persons as are necessary to act on behalf of the corporation in the necessary duties required under civil law, including filing tax returns and reports, filing documents with civil government officials, and transacting such other commercial business and civil duties as may be necessary from time to time.
2. Property. The church shall have the right to purchase, own and sell tangible and intangible assets, including real and personal property, in its own. The title of the property of this church shall be vested in the corporate body of the church.
3. Fiscal year. The fiscal year of the church shall be from January 1 until December 31.
4. Incurring debt. No financial obligation shall be undertaken for this church unless by decision of the elders and pursuant to the terms of the by-laws.
5. Policies and Procedures. It is understood that manuals of procedures must be developed by the elders of this congregation to define those activities and procedures through which the concepts and principles of these by-laws will be implemented. These procedures shall not contradict the provisions or spirit of these by-laws and the Statement of Beliefs and any contradictions are null and void.
6. Dispute Resolution. In keeping with Biblical directive, any claim or dispute between a member of the church and GGBC, Inc. and/or any of the church's officers and shall be settled by mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation of Relational Wisdom 360's Christian Conciliation Service.
7. Amendments. Proposed amendments to the by-laws may be submitted to the elders, who may submit the proposal to the members.
8. Dissolution. All property or assets owned by the local church and its auxiliaries shall be irrevocably dedicated to religious purposes. Upon dissolution of GGBC, Inc., its property or assets shall not inure to the benefit of any private citizen but said property shall be distributed within the Charis Fellowship of Churches as directed by the elders of GGBC. In the event of the failure by the elders to make such a selection, then the Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, General Division, in Darke County, Ohio, shall make the selection.

Approved: _____, 2024