

# GraceLife

CHURCH

GLC

CONSTITUTION & ARTICLES OF GOVERNANCE

September 23, 2012



# GraceLife

CHURCH

## Constitution & Articles of Governance

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLE 1: NAME .....	Page 1
ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE .....	Page 1
ARTICLE 3: ORGANIZATION .....	Page 1
SECTION 1: Authority .....	Page 1
SECTION 2: Elders .....	Page 1
ITEM 1: Qualification .....	Page 1
ITEM 2: Selection .....	Page 2
ITEM 3: Number .....	Page 2
ITEM 4: Function .....	Page 3
ITEM 5: Term .....	Page 4
ITEM 6: Removal .....	Page 4
SECTION 3: Deacons .....	Page 4
SECTION 4: Membership .....	Page 5
ITEM 1: Qualification and Responsibility .....	Page 5
ITEM 2: Discipline .....	Page 5
ARTICLE 4: FINANCES & PROPERTY .....	Page 6
ARTICLE 5: DISSOLUTION .....	Page 6
APPENDIX A: STATEMENT OF FAITH .....	Page 7



## **ARTICLE 1 - NAME**

This local New Testament body of believers in Jesus Christ shall be known as *GraceLife Church*.

## **ARTICLE 2 - PURPOSE**

*GraceLife Church* exists to bring glory to God (Ephesians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 10:31) through worship (John 4:23-24), through the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), through the fellowship of God's people (Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3), through the proclamation of the excellencies of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:28; 1 Peter 2:9), through the keeping of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42; 1 Corinthians 11:26) and through the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8). See STATEMENT OF FAITH, APPENDIX A.

## **ARTICLE 3 - ORGANIZATION**

*GraceLife Church*, a religious institution incorporated in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, shall be an independent, elder-governed church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3). As such, the elders, under the headship of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18) shall have sole authority and responsibility for the doctrine and administration of the church. This Constitution and Articles of Governance may be amended at the discretion of the elders.

### SECTION 1: Authority

This Constitution and Articles of Governance shall never supersede the authority of the Bible, but shall always be subordinate to, and reflective of, the commands and principles outlined in the Word of God as interpreted by the elders.

As a local New Testament body of believers, the Bible shall always be the supreme and all-sufficient authority and shall serve as the foundational basis for the articles contained in this document and all that is done at *GraceLife Church* (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:3, 21).

### SECTION 2: Elders

#### ITEM 1: Qualification

Understanding that the New Testament terms elder (*presbuteros* "older, seasoned men"), pastor (*poimen* "shepherd") and overseer (*episkopos* "ruler" or "superintendent") are used interchangeably to describe varying aspects of the same office, the elders (the term primarily used in this document) shall be men possessing the qualifications outlined and described in the New Testament:

“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

“...namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” (Titus 1:6-9)

The collective eldership shall determine the qualification of each elder and all prospective elders after careful review and consideration.

#### ITEM 2: Selection

Elders shall be selected, appointed and commissioned by the consensus of the collective eldership on the basis of their qualification, aspiration, and affirmation. At any time, at the discretion and determination of the collective eldership, additional elders may be installed.

All vocational elders/pastors shall be selected by the consensus of the collective eldership with their duties and responsibilities determined by the collective eldership.

#### ITEM 3: Number

No specific number shall be required so long as there is always a plurality of qualified elders. Elders may include both vocational and non-vocational elders at the discretion of the collective eldership.

#### ITEM 4: Function

The elders shall function as the governing body of *GraceLife Church*. The Lead Pastor/Elder, as selected by the collective eldership, shall serve as the chairman of the elders. Additionally, the collective eldership shall select a vice chairman from among the elders.

After careful and prayerful consideration, the elders shall generally reach decisions by consensus. Prior to making decisions, the collective eldership may solicit input from the congregation by any method they deem reasonable and appropriate, including but not limited to, designating periods of affirmation during which the congregation may be asked to provide input to the elders.

Consensus shall be defined as agreement by the elders. In the rare event that consensus cannot be reached on an issue for which the chairman determines that a decision must be made, the chairman may call for a majority vote of the elders to determine the course of action to be taken. In the event that a simple majority cannot be achieved, it shall be the responsibility of the chairman to break the tie and make the decision. All decisions made by the elders, whether by consensus or majority vote shall be considered final.

The non-vocational elders, in consultation with the Lead Elder/Pastor, shall be responsible for the determination of remuneration and benefits for the vocational elders.

The Lead Elder/Pastor shall serve as the primary preacher/teacher in the corporate worship services of the church. As the first among equals, he shall provide leadership, direction and counsel to the elders while remaining subordinate to the collective eldership. On behalf of the elders, the Lead Elder/Pastor shall provide supervision, direction and instruction to all staff through a designated reporting structure as determined by the collective eldership.

The elders shall select and commission additional staff elders/pastors at their discretion. Such staff elders/pastors shall function within the elder-designated reporting structure and are functionally accountable to the Lead Elder/Pastor or his designee.

The elders shall select and hire other ministry staff at their discretion. Ministry staff shall serve at the will of the elders under the supervisory direction of the Lead Elder/Pastor or his designee.

#### ITEM 5: Term

There shall be no specified term of service for elders. They shall serve in perpetuity unless he either requests to step down, petitions the collective eldership to take a sabbatical, or is removed by the collective eldership in accordance with ARTICLE 3, SECTION 2, ITEM 6 of this Constitution.

#### ITEM 6: Removal

All elders (vocational and non-vocational) shall be subordinate to the collective eldership of the church and shall be subject to the removal of their designation as an elder for any reason deemed appropriate by the collective eldership. Such removal shall occur in accordance with the decision-making procedure outlined in ARTICLE 3, SECTION 2, ITEM 4 of this Constitution.

An accusation shall not be received against an elder except on the basis of at least two witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19).

In the case of the removal by the collective eldership of an elder's designation, that former elder (vocational or non-vocational) may be asked to leave the church so as to preserve the unity in the church. In such a case, the former elder shall peacefully honor that request.

### SECTION 3: DEACONS

Upon the consensus of the elders, and in accordance with the qualifications listed in the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13), an indefinite number of male deacons (*diakonos* "servant") may be appointed and commissioned by the elders to assist them in the work of the ministry.

The deacons shall serve at the will and direction of the elders and shall not be considered a separate governing body of the church. As such, the deacons (in whole or in part) may be regularly invited to meet with the elders and shall not meet separately from the elders without their consent.

Deacons shall serve in perpetuity unless a deacon requests to step down, petitions the eldership to take a sabbatical, or is removed by the elders. Deacons may be added or removed at any time at the discretion of the elders.

## SECTION 4: MEMBERSHIP

### ITEM 1: Qualification and Responsibility

The New Testament describes the church not as an organization but as an organism, illustrated as a body that consists of members of one another (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 4:4-16). Therefore, the elders shall consider all believers in Jesus Christ who regularly attend and/or participate in the life of *GraceLife Church* to be members of the *GraceLife Church* family.

All members shall accept the responsibility of promoting unity in the body and shall exercise their spiritual gift(s) for the benefit of the body and the glory of God.

All members shall fulfill their responsibility to obey and submit to the elders (Hebrews 13:17), and the elders shall fulfill their responsibility for the spiritual oversight and loving care of the members (1 Peter 5:1-3).

Each member shall follow the provisions and organizational directives set forth in this constitution.

While no voting privileges are granted to the membership, questions, concerns or comments by any member may be directed to the elders for consideration.

### ITEM 2: Discipline

To maintain the unity, peace and purity of the church, the New Testament directs the disciplining of any wayward person by restricting active participation and membership in the local church. Discipline shall be imposed in any case of unrepentant, uncorrected, deliberate sin, whether in doctrine or in practice (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 Timothy 2:16-21);

The New Testament outlines a step-by-step process for dealing with personal offenses (Matthew 18:15-20). The elders shall follow a similar pattern in dealing with wayward members within the church. The elders shall first make reasonable efforts to attempt to privately correct the offender and encourage him to cease from sin and practice the truth.

If the offender refuses to repent, the elders may impose church discipline by excluding the offender from attendance, participation, fellowship and membership of the congregation. The elders shall also instruct the congregation not to have fellowship with the offending party, but rather to pray for and encourage the offender to turn from his sin.

The decision of the elders to place a member under church discipline shall be announced at a regular worship service or a specially called meeting and carried out by the members (Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 5:20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 1:20; Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15).

Persons who have been placed under church discipline but subsequently demonstrate repentance may be restored by the elders to fellowship with the church (Galatians 6:1). Such restoration to fellowship will not necessarily include full restoration to ministry within the church, which shall be determined by the elders in their sole discretion. The only biblical exception to the process stated above is that a divisive or factious member (as determined by the elders) shall be expeditiously removed from the church by the elders (Titus 3:10).

A member undergoing church discipline shall be considered a member throughout the process until restored or removed by the Elders.

#### **ARTICLE 4: FINANCES & PROPERTY**

Financial records shall be maintained by the Financial Secretary, who shall be responsible for the receipt, recording and deposit of funds, and a Treasurer who shall be responsible for record keeping, reporting and disbursement of funds.

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer shall be appointed by, fully accountable to, and serve at the direction and will of the elders. Any and all financial records of the church shall be made available to the elders at their request.

The elders shall be solely responsible for all financial decisions of the church, including, but not limited to, the purchase, acquisition and maintenance of equipment, land, property and loans and distribution of church funds.

#### **ARTICLE 5: DISSOLUTION**

The dissolution of the church shall occur only upon a unanimous decision of the elders of *GraceLife Church*. In the event of dissolution, it shall be the responsibility of the elders to liquidate all assets, settle all financial obligations of the church and contribute any remaining funds to a ministry or church of like-faith and practice. Under no circumstances shall the elders monetarily benefit from the dissolution of the church.

## APPENDIX A: STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe and affirm the FIVE SOLAS of the Reformation: Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone), Sola Gratia (Grace Alone), Sola Fide (Faith Alone), Solus Christus (Christ Alone), and Soli Deo Gloria (To the Glory of God Alone).

We believe in the inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, veracity and sufficiency of the Bible and trust in it as our single source of authority for beliefs and practices. (John 17:17; Psalm 19:7-9, 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3, 20-21)

We believe there is but one true and living God who is an infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and love existing in three persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Samuel 15:29; Isaiah 45:5-7; Isaiah 48:16; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 8:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

We believe mankind was created in the image and likeness of God; as a result of Adam's sin all men inherited a sinful nature, became alienated from God, are totally depraved, and thus are unable to remedy their lost condition apart from divine grace. (Genesis 6:5, 8:21; Jeremiah 17:9; Psalm 10:4; 51:5; Ecclesiastes 9:3; Matthew 12:34-35; Mark 7:21-23; 10:18; John 1:12-13, 3:6, 19, 27; 6:44, 63, 65; Acts 11:18; 18:27; Romans 1:28-31; 3:10, 23, 5:12, 19, 7:18, 8:7-8, 9:16, 12:3; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 21-24, 2:14; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 2:1-5, 8-9; 4:17-18; Philippians 1:29; Colossians 1:21; 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; 1 John 1:8, 10)

We believe that God, before the foundation of the world, for His own glory, chose a great multitude of men and women to eternal life as an act of His free and sovereign grace. His sovereign choosing was in no way dependent upon His foresight of human faith, decision, works or merit. (Matthew 22:14; John 1:12-13; 6:39; 15:16; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-30, 33; 9:11, 16; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11; 2:8-9; Colossians 1:12-13; 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:2)

We believe that those who are called by grace are justified in the sight of God on account of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is received by faith alone. Salvation then is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, to the glory of God alone. (Romans 3:24-25; 4:5-7, 5:9-10, 19; 8:33; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 8:9; Galatians 2:16-21; 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-9; Titus 3:7)

We believe in the virgin birth, the sinless life of Christ, the vicarious substitutionary atonement of Christ, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, a literal heaven and hell, and the eternal security of the believer. (Isaiah 7:14; 53:12; Matthew 1:23, 25; 25:41-46; Mark 9:43, 48; Luke 1:26-35; 16:19-26, 28; John 1:1, 14; 3:36; 5:26-29; 10:15, 27-30; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 3:24-25; 4:25; 5:8-9; 6:5-10; 8:1-16; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Ephesians 1:7;

Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 4:13-18; 5:11-13; Revelation 20:13-15)

We believe the universal church is a spiritual entity composed of all born-again persons of this age of which Christ is the head. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 9:31; I Corinthians 12:28; 15:9; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18)

We believe that the local church shall be governed by a plurality of servant leaders (male elders/pastors) who are accountable to God and each other to lead, guide, teach and shepherd the flock that has been entrusted to them. (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3)

We believe in the importance of church membership and commitment to the local church, which is the pillar and support of the truth. It is to and through the local church that believers are to exercise their spiritual gifts for the edification of the body of Christ. (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 4:4-16; 1 Timothy 3:15)

We believe that baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper are gospel ordinances belonging only to regenerated believers. (Matthew 26:26-29; 28:19; Mark 1:5, 10; Acts 2:38; 8:38-39; 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 23-26, 33-34)

We believe in the imminent return of Christ for His church and a literal future millennial kingdom. (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Titus 2:13; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-7)