



CONSTITUTION

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

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“BY HIS GRACE”

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH
CONSTITUTION
(Ratified unanimously, October 20, 1991)

PREAMBLE

We, the members of GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH, a fellowship of believers by the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord, in order to conform ourselves to the will of God, organize our efforts to accomplish His purposes, promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and secure the blessings of liberty by His Grace, do hereby institute and establish these articles and bylaws as our constitution.

ARTICLE I
ESTABLISHMENT

SECTION 1. IDENTITY:

1.01 NAME

The name of this fellowship shall be Grace Community Church, a Michigan Ecclesiastical Corporation. (John 1:16-17).

1.02 AFFILIATION

We are affiliated with the North America Baptist Conference. (Acts 15).

1.03 HERITAGE

This fellowship was founded in 1898 by a small group of believers who took the name "Ebenezer", meaning "stone of strength or help." Their goal, to which we subscribe today, was to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to their community and to the world, while acknowledging with gratitude and love, God's sustaining power in everyday life. Over the centuries, and as we look to and through the next, God willing, we join in thanks and love with those who have gone before us to proclaim: "Thus far, the Lord has helped us!" (I Sam. 7:12). By His Grace, we will continue.

SECTION 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to glorify God by mobilizing an army of believing men and women who live for Christ with their whole being, who relate biblically in their circles of relationship and who maximize their unique giftedness and calling in order to help fulfill the Great Commission by reaching the unreached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This purpose is accomplished by stimulating individual Christ-likeness through worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism, service, prayer and family and community involvement based upon the Scriptures.

2.01 WORSHIP

Worship is acknowledging God for who He is, submitting and humbling oneself before Him, and expressing love, honor, and gratitude to Him. (Ps. 96:9; Rev. 7:10-12, 11:15-18; II Chron. 20:18).

2.02 INSTRUCTION

Instruction communicates God's truth for its life-changing effect. It involves teachers (who study, model and guide), learners (who study and respond), and the Holy Spirit (who enlightens and enables both teachers and learners). (II Tim. 2:2; I Tim. 1:5; Acts 20:27; James 1:20-21; Col. 3:16; Matt. 28:20).

2.03 FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship involves each of us sharing and participating with other believers, meeting spiritual, emotional, material and social needs, for the purpose of mutual edification and unification in Christ. (Heb. 10:23-25; II Cor. 8:4; Col. 3:17; Phil 1:5).

2.04 EVANGELISM/MISSIONS

Evangelism involves each person proclaiming, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Good News of Jesus Christ to the lost with the desire that the hearer be reconciled to God (I Cor. 15:1-5; II Cor. 5:14-21; Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8). It also involves prayer, a mature, godly lifestyle, gracious speech, and being prepared to give an account of the reason for the hope that is in us. (I Pet. 3:15; Col. 4:2-6). This Gospel message is to be carried not only to those close by, but also to the uttermost parts of the earth. Accordingly, each believer should pray for and support those who have been challenged and sent from our fellowship to fulfill the Great Commission, and remain open to the call of the Holy Spirit personally. (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Phil. 2:25, 4:15-19; Eph. 4:11-13; I Tim. 4:9, 15).

2.05 SERVICE

Service involves each person of the Body of Christ exercising his or her spiritual gifts and God-given abilities in the "work of service" within the church. (Mark 10:43-45; Romans 12:5-8; Eph. 4:11-16; I Peter 4:10).

2.06 PRAYER

Prayer involves each person viewing private and corporate prayer as a crucial element of spiritual life and growth, and as a principal means of accomplishing God's will. (I Tim. 2:1-4; I Thess. 5:17; Col. 4:2-4; Phil. 4:4-6). Accordingly, we can and should confidently approach God (Heb. 4:16) and with faith and thanksgiving, let

our praise, confessions and request be made known to Him (Phil. 4:6). Such fervent prayer has great effect. (James 5:14-15; Gen. 18:23-32; II Cor. 12:7-10).

2.07 FAMILY/COMMUNITY

Our involvement with Christ puts His love into personal practice in our homes, our neighborhoods, our cities and our states. Throughout the Scriptures, we are reminded of the importance which God places upon the establishment and maintenance of family relationships and values within the home. As a comfort to each other, and an example of God's love to the world about us, we uphold the family at this church. (Gen. 2:21-25; Eph. 6:1-4). We also uphold our commitment to the community in which God has placed us. In addition to the proclamation of the Gospel, the church has been commissioned by Christ to extend to the world His ministry of compassion and prophetic protest against evil. The Church can never settle for its own comfort in a world wracked by problems such as moral decay, corruption and oppression, violence and crime and other scourges which require solutions and interventions informed by Scriptural imperatives. While refraining, corporately, from exercising political power in a secular sense, the Church is commanded to act as a conscience, to be both salt and light to the world, by demonstrating the love and righteousness of God in both word and sacrificial deed. We commit to do just that in our community. (Matt. 25:34-36; Luke 3:10-14, 4:16-21; Acts 4:34-35; II Cor. 10:4; Gal. 6:10; James 2:14-26, 5:1-5; I John 3:16).

SECTION 3. AUTHORITY:

The Holy Scriptures, both Old Testament and New Testament, are the foundation of the faith and practice of this fellowship. Nothing in these articles shall be interpreted so as to contradict or superimpose itself upon the ultimate authority of God's Word. (II Tim. 3:16-17).

ARTICLE II DOCTRINE

The ultimate doctrinal position of this fellowship rests in Scriptures and their proper interpretation and promulgation. No brief document such as this could ever hope to adequately convey the scope of doctrine contained in God's Holy Word. However, in an effort to present those points of doctrine which, according to the leadership of this church, do represent the principal beliefs of our fellowship, the following items are listed and defined. As to these several points, elders, staff, and missionaries supported by the church are expected to read, understand, agree with, and be able to defend them. Deacons and leaders who have a teaching ministry are expected to read, understand and agree with them. Other members are expected to read these points and agree not to propagate a contrary view (so as to avoid division). All participants in the fellowship here are expected and encouraged to support this doctrinal statement and these efforts of this church to establish these principles in our community.

SECTION 1. THE PERSON OF GOD:

We believe in one God, creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three equal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:18-19; Deut. 6:4; John 17:5; I John 5:7-8; Romans 1:20).

1.01 GOD THE FATHER

We believe that God the Father is Father over all creation (Acts 17:29), Father of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 3:17, John 3:16) and Father of all believers (Gal. 3:26). It is He who sent Christ to the world in order to save the world (John 3:16-17). He is our provider (Matt. 7:9-11) and our source of loving discipline and direction (Heb. 12:5-11).

1.02 GOD THE SON

We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross, a sacrifice for our sins, according to the Scriptures. He arose bodily from the dead, and He ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of God the Father, He is our High Priest and Advocate. (Luke 1:34-35; I Cor. 15:3-4; Romans 5:8; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 2:9; I John 2:2). From there, He will return to earth one day, take his own unto Him, and establish His eternal kingdom of righteousness and peace. (Acts 1:11; Rev. 19:11-20; Isa. 9:6-7, 11:2-5).

1.03 GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person possessing all the divine attributes. He is God. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. He regenerates, seals, and sets apart the believer to a holy life. At regeneration, He baptizes the believer into the body of Christ and comes to indwell him permanently. (I Cor. 2:10-11, 12:11; Isa. 40:13-14; Ps. 139:7; Titus 3:5; John 3:5-7, 14:16-17, 16:8; Eph. 1:13-14; II Thess. 2:13; I Cor. 2:13; Rom. 8:9).

SECTION 2. THE WORD OF GOD:

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are verbally inspired of God and without error in the original writings, and that the exact meaning of the Scriptures is essentially unchanged in the widely accepted English translations. The Scriptures are authoritative and without error in any category of knowledge, including science and history, and are of supreme and final authority in all matters about which they speak. We believe the Scriptures are to be

interpreted in a normal and literal way and that they are understood as the believer is guided by the Spirit of God. (John 10:35; Matt. 5:18; II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21; I Cor 2:13; I Tim. 5:18; I Cor. 2:14-16; John 16:12-15).

SECTION 3. THE WORK OF GOD:

God created the world (Gen. 1:1) and it was very good (Gen. 1:31). However, because of man's rebellion God now is in the redemptive process of reconciling his creation to Himself according to His perfect plan and will. (II Cor. 5:18-20).

3.01 SALVATION

As part of God's perfect creation, we believe that man was created in the image of God, totally compatible with Him. However, man sinned, and consequently experienced not only physical death, but also spiritual death (which is separation from God). The consequences of this sin infect and affect the entire human race: all human beings are born with a sinful nature and do, in fact, sin in thought, word and deed. (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:17, 3:6; Rom. 3:23, 5:12-19, 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3, 4:18; Mark 7:20-23; John 2:24-25). But God has made provision to reconcile us to Him again:

- .1 GRACE. We believe that whoever, by simple faith alone, relies on or trust Jesus Christ as Savior, instantly becomes a child of God forever. This salvation is not the result of any human effort or merit, at any time, but is God's free gift, purchased at the price of His own Son. (John 1:12; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:28)
- .2 ASSURANCE. We believe that everyone who simply trusts in Christ as Savior has absolute assurance of eternal life, regardless of future performance, based solely upon the integrity of God's promise that everyone who believes has everlasting life and will not come to judgment. (I John 5:11-13).
- .3 SECURITY. We believe that all believers are kept eternally secure by the power of God through the new birth, the indwelling and sealing of the Holy Spirit, and intercession of Christ. (John 10:28-30, 14:16-17; I Pet. 1:23; Eph. 4:30; I John 2:1; Rom. 8:38-39).

3.02 SANCTIFICATION

We believe that all believers, although born again, still possess a sinful nature in this life, but that God has made full provision for us to overcome this sinful nature, and to live for God through identification with Christ, a knowledge of the Scriptures, and by yielding in faith to the power of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 7:15-21, 6:1-11, 8:11-13; Gal. 5:16-24; II Tim. 3:16-17; I John 1:9, 2:1-2).

3.03 GLORIFICATION

We believe that all who have been justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are not only presently being sanctified, but one day will be glorified (Romans 8:30). This means that each believer is promised a new, perfect body, like Christ's own resurrection body (Phil. 3:21), by which to glorify God forever in His Kingdom (Rom. 8:18-23; I Cor. 15:35-58)

SECTION 4. THE CHURCH:

We believe that the Church in its invisible, intangible form is the universal and true Body of Christ. All believers, from the day of Pentecost until the Rapture, are members of this Universal Church, regardless of organizational affiliation. (Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:4-6; Acts 1:5, 11:15-16; I Cor. 12:13; I Thess. 4:13-17; Matt. 16:18).

4.01 SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Throughout Scripture, we see expressed the deep, faithful, indescribable love the Lord has for His Church. It is like the love of a groom for his new bride (Eph. 5:25). It is steadfast, and never fails, being based upon the Lord's own covenant. (Hosea 2:14-23).

4.02 SPECIAL ORDINANCES

We believe that Christ has prescribed that the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper be observed by the Church on a regular basis as a testimony to others, and as a memorial to His work in us and for us. Any believer who expresses a desire to be publicly identified with Christ, in accordance with His direction, shall be baptized by immersion. Any believer who has appropriately examined himself or herself shall be invited to partake of the Lord's Supper, whenever it is practiced at this fellowship. (Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 6:1-7; Luke 22:14-23; I Cor. 11:23-34).

4.03 SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY

We believe that God has given the Church a duty, power and authority to work for Him, and against evil in this age. (Eph. 6:10-20; Matt. 16:13-20). In addition to building up every member of the body, the Church is to make Christ known to the whole world. Every member of the Body shares in this purpose. In relation to the world, believers are sent by Christ to communicate to the unsaved that God is reconciling the world to Himself in Christ. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; II Cor. 5:18-20; John 17:18-20; Acts 1:8; Rom. 10:12-15; Isa. 45:22, 49:6). It is also the responsibility of every believer to strive to develop those qualities of Christian maturity described in God's Word, (Heb. 5:13-14; I Cor. 2:15; Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 2:6-7, 3:1-4; II Pet. 1:5-11), and to utilize the spiritual gifts given to him or her by God for the benefit of Christ's Kingdom. (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12:4-31; Eph. 4:7-13).

SECTION 5. THE ADVERSARY:

We believe in the reality and person of Satan, who, when given the opportunity, attempts to defeat Christians. However, we believe Christians can overcome Satan's schemes by applying Scriptural truth. (Eph. 6:10-19; Luke 10:18; Job 1:6-12; John 8:44).

SECTION 6. END TIMES:

We believe in the personal and imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ and that this "blessed hope" has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer. (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:16-17; Phil. 3:20-21).

We believe that the souls of those who have trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation do, at death, immediately pass into His presence, and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming, when soul and body, reunited, shall be with Him forever in glory. (Ps. 73:24; Luke 16:22, 25, 23:43; II Cor. 5:8; I Thess. 4:15-18; Phil. 1:20-24; I Cor. 15).

We believe that the souls of the lost remain, after death, in misery until the final judgment at the Great White Throne, when the soul and body, reunited at the resurrection, shall be cast "into the lake of fire" which is "the second death", to be punished with everlasting destruction, banished from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. (Luke 16:22-23, 27-28; II Thess. 1:8-9; Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:11-15).

SECTION 7. REWARDS:

We believe that while eternal life is based upon faith alone in Jesus Christ, each Christian will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ. There, the Lord Jesus will assess the quality of each believer's life on earth, not to determine eternal destiny, but simply to determine the degree of reward to be given. Every Christian will then take their reward into Eternity where it will be used to glorify and honor God forever and ever. (I Cor. 3:5-17, 9:24-27; II Cor. 5: 9-10; I John 2:28).

ARTICLE III
CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Grace Community Church is a Christ-ruled, Elder-led, Staff-run, Lay-powered body whose principles, operations and authority are based upon the patterns set for the Church in Scripture, in order to accomplish the purposes ordained for it by God.

SECTION 1. THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH:

We recognize that the Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22, 4:15; Col. 1:18) and that He speaks to his Church through the Holy Scriptures, the infallible and authoritative guide of the Church in matters of faith, order and discipline. (II Tim. 3:16-17). We further recognize that Christ has sent His Church the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us through the understanding of Scripture, divine wisdom granted through prayer, and confirmation in worship. (John 16:13).

SECTION 2. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP:

Spiritual leadership of the Church shall vest in men and women called by God and selected to serve and lead in the following ways:

2.01 ELDERS

While the New Testament clearly proclaims the Lordship of Christ, the teaching of the Scripture, and the work of the Holy Spirit, as the source of direction for the Church, it also clearly vests spiritual and human authority in certain "servant leaders" called and appointed to such a ministry. Referred to in Scripture as "episkopos" or "presbyteros", today these servant leaders are commonly called "Elders". (Phil. 1:1; Titus 1; I Tim. 3; Eph. 2). In keeping with the example of Scripture, the responsibility for temporal and spiritual leadership at this church shall vest in a Board or Council of Elders.

.1 AUTHORITY OF ELDERS

Elders have authority under Christ for the direction, doctrine and discipleship of this fellowship. (Heb. 13:17). Such authority is expressed in servant leadership rather than human lordship over those placed in their charge. (I Pet. 5:2-3).

.2 QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

Every elder must be qualified in accordance with I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The first qualification is that he aspires to the office of Elder, which is a good thing. (I Tim. 3:1). This means that an Elder must desire to assume a responsibility for the souls of people and agree to one day stand before the Lord to give an account for those same souls. (Heb. 13:17). Also, according to the descriptions consistently provided by

Scripture, this particular role in the work of the Church is one reserved for godly men. In adopting this role application, however, we affirm the equality of men and women before God from their creation in God's image (Gen. 1:27), and through their unity in Christ's Body (Gal. 3:28). We also affirm that men and women share equally the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including the gifts of leadership, and are co-laborers together with Christ, working to establish His dominion over the earth. The balance of the qualifications are clearly outlined in the Scriptures, (I Tim. 3; Titus 1) and concern certain character qualities as they relate to the community at large, the church, family, self and God. Elders must meet each of these standards.

.3 ACCOUNTABILITY OF ELDERS

As servants, leading by example, each elder shall be accountable to the Lord, and to His Church by such means as the Board of Elders appropriates as to the elder's qualifications, example, and performance of responsibilities, according to the express provisions of I Tim. 5:17. The authority and responsibility placed upon each elder by the congregation through their ratification of this document is a demonstration of love, high trust, and devotion to God. It must not be taken lightly. As a congregation, then, we are strongly committed to maintain these standards of Biblical accountability in love and trust by the several means afforded herein, so that the leadership of this church may always faithfully reflect its true head: Jesus Christ.

.4 RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Elders shall have general oversight of the congregation and direct the affairs of the church as its Board of Directors. Such responsibilities of the elders include, but are not limited to the following:

01. Providing examples of Godliness. (I Pet. 5:2-3)
02. Devoting themselves to prayer, study, and teaching the Word of God. (Acts. 6:4; I Tim. 3:2, 4:13, 5:17).
03. Helping to make disciples of believers in the Fellowship by training and direction. (I Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28; Col. 1:28).
04. Guarding the Fellowship from false teaching. (Acts. 20:28-30; Titus 1:9-11).
05. Admonishing with love those who are disobedient to the Scripture. (II Tim. 2:24-26; I Cor. 5:1-13) and disciplining those who will not deal with their sin according to God's Word. (Matt. 18:15-17)
06. Praying for the sick and needy. (James 5:14).
07. Providing vision, direction, and management for the Fellowship by the establishment and use of such guidelines, interpretations and auditing procedures as may be necessary to accomplish the Lord's purposes in this church. (I Tim. 3:5, 5:17).

.5 RESPONSIVENESS

In order to meet these responsibilities and provide Christ-directed leadership for His Church, elders are charged to examine themselves, the Scriptures, and every aspect of the issues and facts brought before them in their deliberations. They are especially encouraged to take into account the advice and influence of such godly men (Psalm 1; Proverbs 15:22) and godly women (Titus 2; I Timothy 2) as may be fit to each circumstance under their consideration.

.6 SELECTION

In the New Testament, elders were appointed by apostolic authority based primarily upon the presence of the character traits listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. While the apostles are no longer present to appoint elders, the scriptural implication is that spiritual leadership in each local church should continue to select and affirm elders based upon those same high standards. According to Acts 20:28, the Holy Spirit sets men apart to the office of Elder. As such individuals are identified by the Spirit, it is the responsibility of the elders and the body to confirm His choices following the procedure outlined below:

01. Annually, the Board of Elders will review a slate of candidates who exhibit the character traits of, and are aspiring to, the position of Elder. This slate will be made up of individuals suggested by the congregation or the Elder Board.
02. After prayerful review, each elder candidate will be personally interviewed by no less than the Senior Pastor and the chairman of the Elder Board to see if there is mutual interest and consent in aspiration to this position. Each candidate should be involved in personal prayer and self-evaluation in light of I Tim. 3 and Titus 1.
03. The name of each elder candidate will then be submitted to the congregation for consideration. Prayerful attention should be given to the biblical qualifications noted above. Any reservations as to a candidate's suitability should be privately submitted to the prospective elder at this time. If not

promptly resolved, issues of personal offense should proceed under Matt. 18:15-17. Other issues of qualification should be brought privately to the Board of Elders for consideration.

04. After prayerful review, each name will be submitted to a vote by the existing elders. Unanimous consent shall be required in order to be chosen to serve. The candidate will then be presented to the Fellowship as an elder-in-waiting.
05. A six-month internship period will follow, to include both instruction and practical experience for the candidate as a non-voting member of the Board of Elders. Each intern will continue to review his qualifications and desires during this training. Also during this time, the Body is encouraged to bring before the Elders any concerns which would disqualify the candidate, which concerns will be treated according to I Tim. 5:19-20.
06. At the end of this internship, each remaining candidate will be presented for ratification by the membership of the church. Thereafter, the candidate will be submitted for installation by the laying on of hands by the existing Elders at a public service of the church, and then begin serving in the office of Elder, as a servant leader of this church. (Acts. 13; I Tim. 4).
07. Once installed and ratified, each elder shall have equal authority. (I Pet. 5:1-4; Acts 20:28-35). Those who lead, preach, and/or teach well are worthy, however, of double honor. (I Tim. 5:17-18).

.7 NUMBER

The New Testament always speaks of a plurality of Elders, therefore the number of elders shall be no less than three and as many as the Board of Elders shall determine from time to time.

.8 TERM

The New Testament sets no term for the office of Elder. It is a lifetime responsibility unless one is disqualified according to I Tim. 3, Titus 1 and I Tim. 5:19-20. However, recognizing the importance of objectivity and the principles of sabbatical rest, the term of active service shall be three years, unless otherwise specified when the elder is selected. An elder shall not be required to serve consecutive terms of active service, and shall be encouraged during hiatus to devote time to rest, study, family and spiritual growth while maintaining the office of elder with reduced time and activity.

.9 DISCIPLINE/REMOVAL

Discipline of elders will follow the Biblical pattern given in I Tim. 5:17-21. Ungodly conduct or attitude substantiated in the manner given in the above text will result in a vote of the Board of Elders. Any Elder may be removed by two-thirds vote at such time. Each elder is also expected to continue in self-examination pursuant to the principles noted above. An elder may resign or take a leave of absence for any reason at any time, and may thereafter resume office upon the unanimous vote of the Board of Elders.

.10 MEETINGS

Announced or regular meetings may be held without additional or special notice to any elder. Special meetings of the Board of Elders may be called at the request of the Chairman of the Board of Elders, the Senior Pastor, or a majority of the Board of Elders. Personal notice of any special meeting shall be given to each elder before the meeting.

.11 DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

Leadership authority is vested in the Board of Elders. Unless otherwise provided herein, any action by a majority of the elders present at a meeting shall be the act of the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders has the power to delegate to individuals, committees or organizations the right to transact any of its business or to exercise any of its powers, but the exercise of such delegated authority shall be subject to the supervision and control of the Board of Elders.

.12 DISCRETION

In keeping with the provisions of their qualification and the authority of their appointment, the Board of Elders is charged with discretion to lead this Body of Christ, according to these precepts.

2.02 MINISTRY STAFF

In the New Testament there were elders and others in the body of Christ who exercised leadership in a given area on a full-time basis. Today, these full-time leaders are commonly referred to as "pastors" in our culture. This fellowship recognizes such positions, and our several responsibilities to and with them.

.1 SENIOR PASTOR

.01 QUALIFICATION AND CALL:

The Senior Pastor shall be subject to the same standards of qualification and accountability as an Elder. The search for a Senior Pastor will primarily be the responsibility of the Board of Elders, whose candidate will require a unanimous vote of the elders for nomination, and the affirmation of two-thirds of the members of the church in order to affect his call. The Senior Pastor shall thereby

also be appointed to the Board of Elders and shall continue in office as long as the Elder Board and the Senior Pastor both agree.

.02 RESPONSIBILITIES

.1 TEACHING AND PREACHING

Consistent with the New Testament concept of gifts, it is evident that the Senior Pastor, like any member of the body is uniquely gifted and should seek to minister in his gift area. (Eph. 4:11-12; I Cor. 12). In addition to his pastoral role as an Elder, the Senior Pastor is primarily to be a teacher of the Word of God. He is to teach and exhort by precept and example. His goal is to help bring believers to maturity in Christ through his insight and his accurate presentation and proclamation of the Word, equipping them to do the work of the "ministry" in the body. (Eph. 4:13). As a teacher, he must stress both the understanding and application of God's truth. (Rom. 12:6-7; I Thess.2:4-5; Titus 1:7)

.2 ORDINANCES

The Senior Pastor shall supervise the administration of rites, ceremonies and ordinances, at the church, including baptism, the Lord's Supper, weddings, funerals and services.

.3 ADMINISTRATION

The Senior Pastor shall prayerfully provide overall vision and leadership to the church. This leadership will primarily be accomplished by working with and overseeing the other staff and elders. The Senior Pastor shall act as ex-officio member of the Boards, organizations and committees of the church and shall suggest appointments of and to such committees as may be necessary. More specific duties may be assigned by the elders based upon the Senior Pastor's specific gifts and passions.

.03 TERMINATION:

A Senior Pastor may resign at any time, or may be dismissed by two-thirds vote of the Board of Elders. Upon resignation or dismissal of a Senior Pastor, the Board of Elders shall be responsible to find a suitable replacement.

.2 ASSOCIATE PASTORS

After presentation to the congregation and prayerful consultation with the membership, a candidate for Associate Pastor recommended by the Senior Pastor, approved unanimously by the Board of Elders, and subject to the moral qualifications of an Elder as indicated in I Tim. 3 may be called. An Associate Pastor may, but not necessarily be, appointed to the Board of Elders according to the procedures outlined generally in Section 2.01 of this article. An Associate Pastor may resign at any time, or may be dismissed by a majority vote of the Board of Elders.

.3 OTHER STAFF

Such other staff as it appears is necessary or appropriate to the work of the Church shall, upon recommendation of the Senior Pastor, be appointed by the Board of Elders as needed, subject to the oversight of the Senior Pastor. Such other staff may resign at any time, or may be dismissed at the discretion of the Senior Pastor or a majority vote of the Board of Elders.

2.03 DEACONS AND DEACONESSES

As shepherds of the church, one of the roles of the Elders is to appoint other gifted leaders to undertake areas and aspects of the ministry that cannot be filled by the Senior Pastor or Elders without unduly burdening them. (Acts 6:1-7, 20:28). The New Testament clearly describes the office and work of such "hands-on" servants, called "DEACONS", who are charged with serving under the direction and authority of Christ and the Elders of His church.

.1 QUALIFICATIONS: Qualifications for Deacon are those set forth in I Tim. 3:8-13.

.2 ELECTION: Deacons shall be elected by and be subject to the Board of Elders. (Acts 6:1-7). Each Deacon shall serve a term of three years, unless otherwise specified when elected. A deacon shall not be required to serve consecutive terms. Deacons shall meet at such times as they shall determine would be appropriate.

.3 RESPONSIBILITIES: A Deacon serves in the church:

.01 To enable the ministry staff and elders to continue giving priority to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

.02 To address the physical needs of the fellowship and community.

.03 To assist the elders and staff in the everyday operations of the church. (Acts 6).

2.04 TEACHERS

Teaching within the body is not limited to the Senior Pastor. The New Testament emphasizes the need for teaching Elders and the utilization of other members who are gifted in this area, thus providing a variety of input and role models. (I Tim. 3:2; II Tim. 2:2). With the concurrence of the Senior Pastor, members qualified and gifted as teachers may be appointed by the Board of Elders as teachers and shall thereby exercise such authority as is necessary for the accomplishment of the teaching ministry.

2.05 COMMITTEES

.1 FORMATION

The Board of Elders will appoint Standing Committees for the ministry areas of the church. Consideration will be given to all recommendations for committee members submitted by members of the congregation. One or more Elders may serve as ex-officio members in an advisory capacity and as liaison between the Committee and the Board of Elders. Full-time Ministry Staff may be appointed to such committees as may be appropriate. Additional Standing and/or Ad hoc Committees may be appointed by the Board of Elders as necessary.

.2 QUALIFICATIONS

Committee members shall be members in good standing of the church, in accord with and supportive of the doctrinal position and ministry of the Church. They shall also possess those qualifications the Board of Elders deems appropriate and necessary for the specific committee to which they are appointed.

.3 DISMISSAL

The Board of Elders may dismiss a committee member for failure to participate actively, failure to operate within the established committee guidelines, or lack of qualification. Likewise, committees may be reorganized or dissolved in keeping with the ministry and changing needs of the church.

2.06 ADJUNCT MINISTRIES

Subject to the oversight of the Board of Elders, such adjunct ministries as shall be fitting with the purposes and functions of this church outlined above may be authorized by the Board of Elders to operate in affiliation with this church.

2.07 OFFICERS

In addition to the offices noted above, the Board of Elders may appoint such other officers to perform functions of special character as may be necessary. Such officers, including but not limited to the Treasurer and Financial Secretaries, shall report upon their responsibilities directly to the Board of Elders.

SECTION 3. LAY EMPOWERMENT:

3.01 VOTE OF MEMBERS

The members of this fellowship will be called upon to ratify the leadership of the Board of Elders upon the following occasions:

- .1 The annual budget of the church.
- .2 The Ratification and Installation of Elders, including the Senior Pastor, whereupon members will be called upon to commit themselves as well, pursuant to Heb. 13:17-18.
- .3 The Amendment of this Document. This Document was drafted by faithful but fallible people. Should the Spirit of God point out the need to revise this document in any way, the elders shall present the suggested revisions to the ministry staff for their consideration, and ultimately to the members of the body for ratification.

3.02 PROCEDURES

All such membership votes shall be preceded by not less than two week's notice in the church bulletin, or by public announcement on Sunday morning, not less than two weeks prior to the date of the vote. A majority of votes cast shall carry any proposal, except as to the calling of the Senior Pastor or the amendment of this document which require two-thirds. At the discretion of the moderator, absentee ballots may be provided upon request to informed members in good standing who would otherwise be unable to vote due to illness or absence for good cause.

3.03 PARTICIPATION

It shall be the solemn duty of each member voting, to do so prayerfully and in the spirit of love, kindness and unity. (John 16; Eph. 4:29-32)

ARTICLE IV
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The New Testament teaches and illustrates, by the early Church's example, that God intended His people to join together in local definable groups. These local bodies were made up of people who had trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior and who were willing to serve Him by identifying and committing themselves to a particular local body. These groups of dedicated people became powerful witnesses to the greatness and love of God.

This church desires to be a powerful and effective servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. In order for this to be accomplished, we recognize the need for commitment and accountability. Formal membership is intended as a vehicle to focus our commitment and function as a mechanism of accountability.

We also desire to welcome all individuals, and to uphold those principles of commitment to Christ and to the Body, which Scripture teaches must accompany true membership in the Body of Christ's Church.

To accomplish these ends, this church offers two opportunities for affiliation: friendship and membership.

SECTION 1. FRIENDSHIP:

Friendship allows individuals to informally identify this fellowship as their church home while still allowing them the freedom to further investigate their faith and the ministry of the church before entering into the full commitment of formal membership. Subject to the discretion and responsibility of the Board of Elders, each of those associated in friendship will be fully welcomed and encouraged to participate in all church activities under these articles with the exception of voting, and holding certain leadership positions.

SECTION 2. MEMBERSHIP:

Those believers who feel called or directed to formally and fully commit themselves to participation in the work of God at this church may apply for membership, under these articles.

2.01 MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

Membership is open to anyone who:

- .1 has trusted Jesus Christ as personal Savior, and been baptized by immersion as a believer, to give public witness of his or her faith in Christ;
- .2 is willing to commit to serve the Lord Jesus through the ministry and vision of this church; and
- .3 is of sufficient age to be able to personally consent and commit to membership. (Those under the age of 18 must have the written consent of their parent or legal guardian and may not cast a vote).

2.02 MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENT AND CONTINUITY

Individuals who meet the criteria for membership may become members by:

- .1 completing three months of regular attendance at church meetings, including such membership classes as are periodically offered.
- .2 having personal interview with an elder or a committee of elders' appointment; and
- .3 being publicly introduced and welcomed to the fellowship and family of Grace Community Church.

Every year, in January, the members of this fellowship will enjoy the opportunity to renew their commitment to the Lord, to this church, and to one another by acknowledging their desire to continue in unity with the work here.

2.03 REMOVAL OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership status can be withdrawn as follows:

- .1 by the request of that member in good standing;
- .2 by failure to renew, resulting in a lapse of membership recognized by the Board of Elders;
- .3 by the Elders according to the following procedure:

Church membership being a human vehicle for encouraging fellowship, edification, and accountability in a local group of believers, there may be times when the official relationship between a believer and the local body needs to be officially ended. The Elders of this fellowship have the authority to terminate membership as follows:

- .01 For lack of participation due to absence, disinterest or some other cause. (Those in vocational Christian work in another area and those shut-in are obvious exceptions).

- .02 For long term or intentionally maintained disobedience, rebellion, or sin (in attitude and action) detrimental to the life of the believer or to the body of Christ. (Matt. 18:15-20; I Corinth. 5:1-13; II Thess. 3:6-15; and Titus 3:9-11).
- .03 The elders are to use their discretion to establish and follow such procedures and steps, as are consistent with the Scriptures and this document, to accomplish these ends.

SECTION 3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPATION IN THE BODY:

Generally speaking, a functioning member of the Body of Christ has joyfully decided to submit his or her life to the Lordship of Christ, which is to say that there is a desire to bring each phase of life under His authority and control. This translates into several areas of responsibility in church life:

3.01 RESPONSIBILITY TO CHRIST

Under the Lordship of Christ we also have responsibility to Him. Primarily this involves yielding our lives to Christ on a daily basis (Romans 6:7-16; 12:1-2) so that His character and His holiness begin to permeate every area of our existence. This yieldedness translates into a daily relationship filled with conversation and interaction with Christ through worship, adoration, prayer and study of His Word that results in obedience to His directives.

3.02 RESPONSIBILITY TO ONESELF

Under the Lordship of Christ we have a responsibility to realize that we have been created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) that we are loved by Him to the extent that Christ was sent to die for us (John 3:16) and that because we are esteemed by God, we can esteem ourselves as worthwhile creatures that have purpose and meaning both in this life and the next.

3.03 RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD SPIRITUAL LEADERS

It is the privilege of members to honor and esteem their spiritual leaders; to pray for them fervently; to submit to them in the scriptural exercises of their official authority; to stand with them as they stand for the "faith which was once delivered to the saints." (Eph. 4:8, 11; I Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:17).

3.04 RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHER BELIEVERS

Under the Lordship of Christ we have a responsibility to interact with our brothers and sisters in Christ in a manner becoming to members of God's family. By and large these family responsibilities are embodied in the "one another" passages in the New Testament:

- .1 Love one another. (John 13:34, 35, 15:12, 17; I Thess. 4:9; I Peter 1:22; I John 3:11, 23, 4:7, 11, 12).
- .2 Exhort and admonish one another. (I Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13, 10:24; Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16).
- .3 Edify and accept one another (through spiritual giftedness). (Gal. 5:13; I Peter 4:10; Romans 15:7).
- .4 Give to one another (Rom. 12:10).
- .5 Spend time and be hospitable with one another (Heb. 10:24, 25; I Pet. 4:9).
- .6 Be kind to one another (Eph. 4:32).
- .7 Restore one another (Gal. 6:1, 2).

3.05 RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

In addition to those responsibilities towards all believers, it is the duty of each member to cultivate and cherish brotherly love for all members of this church; to pray for each other, visit and sympathize with them in affliction (I John 4:7-21; Rom. 12:9; Col. 3:12-14; I Pet. 4:8-9; Gal. 6:1-12), and to prayerfully, in brotherhood, participate in voting upon those items as are defined in Article III, Section 3.

3.06 RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD STEWARDSHIP

Each member shall have the joyful opportunity to participate in God's work by contributing systematically as the Lord has prospered in treasure, talent and time (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9:6, 7; Malachi 3:10; Luke 12:34; I Cor. 4:2).

3.07 RESPONSIBILITY TO THE NON-CHRISTIAN WORLD

Under the Lordship of Christ we also have a responsibility to interact with the unsaved world in such a manner that God may use us to share the message of Christ with them. This includes spending time with non-believers (I Cor. 5) praying for non-believers (Col. 4:1-4) and bringing new believers into the local church where they can grow into mature disciples.

ARTICLE V
LICENSING AND ORDAINING

According to the authority and example contained in Acts 13, this church shall undertake to identify and support those called to professional ministry by licensure and ordination.

SECTION 1. LICENSING:

Any member who gives evidence of being called of God to the work of the ministry, by piety, zeal and aptness to teach, may be licensed to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The requirements for licensing are:

- 1.01 Demonstration of the qualities notes above.
- 1.02 Preaching at a service of the church.
- 1.03 Unanimous approval of the Board of Elders.

SECTION 2. ORDAINING:

If the church desires to ordain a member to the full-time work of the ministry, then the church shall invite pastors and brethren from churches of like faith to sit in council, with them, to advise regarding Ordination. This council, after due examination of the candidate and consultation, may advise the church to ordain or refrain from doing so, but the final decision shall rest with the Board of Elders. Upon their unanimous vote, the candidate shall be ordained.

SECTION 3. PRESENTATION:

Ordination shall be instituted and licensing be announced at a public service of the church, for the encouragement and edification of all present.

ARTICLE VI
CHURCH COVENANT

As believers in Jesus Christ, members of the universal Church (1 Cor. 12:13) and affiliates of the local fellowship gathered at Grace Community Church in Detroit, Michigan, we commit ourselves to the threefold task of sharing the saving message of the Cross of Christ with the unbelieving world, while discipling and bring to maturity all who embrace its message by faith and thankfully recognizing the sustaining power and grace of God who has brought us this far. (Matt. 28:19-20; Col. 1:27-28; 1 Sam. 7:12). We pledge to work diligently toward the fulfillment of these goals, using any Biblically sound methodology, including a lifestyle that is fully pleasing to the Lord (Col. 1:10, 4:5), a bold and accurate verbal testimony as God would grant the opportunity (1 Peter 3:15-16), the exercise of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-31) and the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26) in the unified and loving atmosphere of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:1-16). We fully understand and embrace the truth that the strength for these endeavors and the fruit that is the result of their exercise, comes not from human flesh but from the God who grants all increase. (1 Cor. 3:7). His Son who is the Head and the nourisher of the church (Eph. 4:15-16), and the indwelling, life-giving, Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead (Rom. 8:11). We now commit to the exercise of this Biblical covenant of ministry, in conjunction with the leadership of this assembly (Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-4), as God gives us the grace to do so until the glorious return of His Son (1 Thess. 4:13-5:8).

ARTICLE VII
IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION 1. EFFECTIVE DATE:

This Constitution shall be effective as of the date of its ratification.

SECTION 2. REPLACEMENT OF PREVIOUS CONSTITUTION:

Upon ratification of these articles, the constitution of 1981 shall be of no further effect and these articles shall be the governing articles of this church.

SECTION 3. INTERIM RULES:

While the tenets of this constitution are to be effective immediately, some of its provisions, specifically those relating to the establishment of the Board of Elders, require the passage of time. For purpose of implementation only, such terms shall be modified as follows:

- 3.01 The time period within which a candidate for the office of elder is examined shall be shortened so as to allow the initial Board of Elders to be installed ninety days after the date of ratification.
- 3.02 During that ninety day period of time, the Board of Deacons of this Church, as it is constituted on the date of ratification, shall serve and act as the interim Board of Elders.

3.03 From the time of implementation until the first elders are installed, the Board of Deacons, acting as the Board of Elders, may authorize such continuing functions and budgetary processes as shall seem to them appropriate to meet the needs and goals of the ministry at this church. Likewise, the Board of Elders, once installed, may continue those functions and budgetary processes as shall seem to them appropriate in order to achieve an orderly transition in operations during the year 1992.

BELOVED, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER, FOR LOVE IS OF GOD,
AND EVERYONE WHO LOVES IS BORN OF GOD,