

**CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF**

Grace Fellowship Baptist Church

4790 Capital Ave SW

Battle Creek, MI 49015

## **CONSTITUTION**

### **PREAMBLE:**

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith, to govern the body in an orderly manner, and preserve the freedom of action of this body in its relationship to other organizations, churches, associations, and conventions.

### **ARTICLE I: NAME**

This Church shall be known as Grace Fellowship Baptist Church of Battle Creek, Michigan. This Church will be further referred to in the Constitution and By-Laws as the "Church." The Church maintains its principal office at 4790 Capital Ave SW Battle Creek, MI 49015. The Church shall have full power and authority to change the principal office from one location to another.

### **ARTICLE II: AFFILIATION**

This Church shall be affiliated with the South Central Baptist Association, the Baptist State Convention of Michigan and the Southern Baptist Convention. Insofar as is practical, this Church will cooperate with and support the above mentioned affiliates.

### **ARTICLE III: PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Church is to love God in all we do, telling others about Jesus Christ, serving others like Jesus Christ and by teaching all to be like Jesus Christ. In doing so, we strive to glorify God by fulfilling the Great Commandment (*Matthew 22:36-40*) and the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20*). We do so through:

1. EVANGELISM/MISSION - "To share the good news of Jesus Christ with as many people as possible in our community and throughout the world both individually and corporately." (*Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Peter 3:9*).
2. EDUCATION/DISCIPLESHIP - "To help members develop toward full Christian maturity and train them for effective ministry. To promote personal, spiritual growth and discipleship through Bible teaching. "Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (*Ephesians 4: 11-13; Matthew 28: 20; II Timothy 2:2*).
3. WORSHIP - "To maintain an attitude of reverence for who God is and glorify God to the fullest as we participate in congregational worship together and maintain personal daily devotions." (*John 4:24; Revelation 19: 10*).
4. MINISTRY/SERVICE - "To serve unselfishly in Jesus' name: meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those in our Church, community and in the world." (*I Peter 4:10-11, Matthew 25: 34-40; I Thessalonians 5:11; Galatians 5:13*).
5. FELLOWSHIP - "To deepen relationships between God and each other by encouraging, supporting, and praying for one another as members of the Family of God. To share our lives together and, in

love, hold each other accountable to the teachings of Christ." (*I John 1:7; Acts 2: 44-47; Hebrews 10: 23-25; Romans 15: 5.1; John 13: 34-35.*).

#### ARTICLE IV: **INCORPORATION**

This Church is incorporated according to the laws of the State of Michigan governing religious bodies.

#### ARTICLE V: **DOCTRINE**

##### **Statement of Faith**

We affirm that the Holy Bible is the inspired Word of God, and is the sole basis for our beliefs. We regard the scriptures of the Holy Bible as authoritative in all matters of faith, practice, and truth. This Church accepts "The Baptist Faith and Message", as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000 AD, as the affirmation of basic Christian beliefs and as a general statement of our faith.

#### ARTICLE VI: **POLITY**

The government of this Church is under the authority of the body of believers who compose it, owing allegiance only to its head and founder, the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe in the right of each member of the Church to have a voice in its government, plans, and discipline. Persons duly received by the members of this Church shall constitute its membership. This Church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Baptist churches. All internal groups created and empowered by this Church shall report to and be accountable to this Church. The government of this Church shall be congregational in form.

#### ARTICLE VII: **COVENANT**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, and the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our relatives and acquaintances; to walk prudently in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, encouraging in our interactions, exemplary in our conduct, and careful to not put any stumbling block or an occasion to fall in our brother's way. We will be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

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

## **BY-LAWS**

### **ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP**

#### **SECTION I: Qualifications**

This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist Church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.

The Membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this Church and the conditions of membership.

#### **SECTION II: Method of Receiving Members**

Persons who have given evidence of regeneration by the Spirit of God, who have been scripturally baptized by immersion, who have subscribed to the Church Covenant and Statement of Faith, and agreed to abide by the Constitution of this Church may apply for membership by one of the following ways:

- A. By baptism upon profession of faith in Christ as Savior.
- B. By letter from a church of like faith and order.
- C. By statement of faith and baptism by immersion when no letter is obtained.

All prospective members shall be formally received after a recommendation by the Church Leadership Team, at a regular worship service.

#### **SECTION III: Duties of Church Members**

- A. New church members will be expected to participate in the church's New Member Orientation.
- B. Each member is expected to take an active role, according to his/her own spiritual gifts, in the work and support of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church.
- C. Each member is expected to exercise their voting rights within the Church. Persons carried on a Mission Membership Role shall exercise their rights within the Mission only.
- D. Every member is expected to continue maturing in their relationship with Christ.

#### **SECTION IV: Termination of Membership**

- A. By letter of admission to another church of like faith. (The letter may not be granted to the individual.)
- B. By dropping from the role those who have joined a church of another denomination.
- C. By death. (Church shall maintain a deceased membership role).
- D. By termination on request of the individual, after a three-month period.
- E. By exclusion scripturally according to Matthew 18. If it becomes necessary for the church to take action to exclude a member, a three-fourth's (3/4's) vote of the members present is required; and the

church may proceed to declare the person to no longer be in the membership of the church. All such proceedings shall be bathed in prayer and exhibit a spirit of Christian kindness and patience.

#### Section V: Church Discipline

- A. It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The pastor, other members of the church staff, and deacons will be available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption and restoration rather than punishment.
- B. If a decision comes to an impasse, an outside mediator may be selected and utilized as needed.

#### SECTION VI: **Restoration of Members**

The Church shall always be ready to reinstate a former member upon his/her repentance before the Church.

### ARTICLE II: **ORDINANCES**

#### SECTION I: **Baptism**

- A. Evidence of repentance and public profession of faith in Christ shall precede baptism.
- B. Baptism shall be by immersion only.
- C. Baptism shall be by the pastor or whomever the church body shall authorize.

#### SECTION II: **The Lord's Supper**

- A. Prerequisites for participation in the Lord's Supper shall be according to Paul's statements as found in I Corinthians 11: 27-29.
- B. The Lord's Supper shall be observed as often as prescribed by the church, at least quarterly.
- C. The deacons shall assist the pastor in the administering of the Lord's Supper. In their absence, the pastor shall appoint other members to assist.
- D. The elements shall be consistent with the Church Covenant.

### ARTICLE III: **CHURCH OFFICERS**

#### SECTION I: **Pastor**

- A. The Call: Whenever a vacancy occurs, a pastor shall be called by the Church to serve until the relationship is dissolved at the request of either the pastor or the Church. The call of the pastor shall take place at a business meeting especially set for the purpose, with at least two weeks' notice being given the membership.

(An Interim Pastor may be selected by the Pastor Search Team, or by the Church Leadership Team in the absence of a Pastor Search Team, with the approval of the Church).

The election shall be upon the recommendation of a special Pastor Search Team elected by the Church to seek out and nominate a pastor, a Baptist minister of the Gospel, whose Christian character and qualifications (1 *Timothy* 3: 1-7, Titus 1:6-9) fit him for the office. The Pastor Search Team shall bring only one name at a time for the consideration of the church and nominations shall not be made except by the Team. A compensation package shall be presented to the Church at the time of the call. The election shall be by secret ballot with the affirmative vote of three-fourth's (3/4's) of those members present and voting necessary for the extension of a call. Should the pastor recommended by the Team fail to receive a three-fourth's (3/4's) majority vote, the meeting at which the vote was taken shall be adjourned without debate, and the Team shall seek out another pastoral candidate.

The Pastor Search Team shall consist of a minimum of five (5) persons elected by secret ballot - preferably prior to the former Pastor's departure from the church field.

- B. Termination: The pastor may resign the care of the Church by giving thirty (30) days notice prior to his departure from the church field. The Church may terminate his call in like manner, following a three-fourth's (3/4's) majority vote of the membership present and voting at a business meeting called at least two weeks in advance for that purpose. This thirty (30) days notice may be dispensed with by mutual consent of the pastor and church at the above noted meeting.
- C. Severance Package The Church will give no more than two (2) months severance package consisting of salary and benefits when dismissing the Pastor, during which time his salary and benefits will continue. No other compensation will be made.
- D. Responsibilities of the Pastor:
1. The Pastor shall be Overseer and Shepherd of the Church. He has the responsibility to lead the congregation and will be expected to delegate appropriate responsibilities to others to insure the work of the church is done in a consistent manner
  2. The Pastor shall be moderator at all business meetings of the Church unless the Pastor requests otherwise. In the event there is no pastor, the Church Leadership Team shall nominate a moderator and present the nominee to the Church.
  3. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all organizations and committees and may call a special meeting of any organization or committee whenever such need arises.
  4. The Pastor shall secure evangelists for revivals and guest speakers to fill the pulpit in his scheduled absence. In the absence of a pastor, the Pastor Search Team or committee duly elected by the Church shall secure guest speakers.
  5. The Pastor shall be responsible for all worship services of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church.
  6. The Pastor shall give personal direction to the total ministry of the Church in the manner described in 1 Peter 5: 2-3. Through the preaching and teaching of the Bible, he shall equip the Church for ministry as described in Ephesians 4: 12.

## SECTION II: **Other Staff Members**

- A. The church staff shall include paid personnel involved in the administrative functions of the Church.
- B. The number of staff personnel shall be determined by the needs of the Church.
- C. Job descriptions, terms of call, and salary shall be recommended by the Church Leadership Team at the time of call.
- D. All church staff members shall be approved by a three-fourths (3/4's) majority vote of the church membership present and voting at a duly authorized business meeting and shall be members of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church.
- E. Termination of Church Staff would be decided by the Church in consultation with the Pastor.

## SECTION III: **Deacons**

- A. The number of deacons shall be determined by the needs of the Church and shall be nominated by the Church Leadership Team in consultation with the Pastor.
- B. Deacons are to be spiritual leaders of high Christian character (1 *Timothy 3:8ff*), who function in a servant role on behalf of the Church. The Deacon is to assist the Pastor in carrying out the work of the ministry.
- C. The deacons shall be elected by a three-fourths (3/4's) majority vote of the Church membership present and voting, from among those church members who have proven themselves to have scriptural qualifications according to *1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and Acts 6:3*.
- D. Deacons shall be elected for a term of three (3) years unless elected to fill an unexpired term or when a shorter term is necessary to maintain a balanced rotation system. The terms of office of the deacons shall be concurrent with the calendar year. No deacon shall serve as an active deacon for more than three (3) consecutive years without at least one (1) year of inactive status. Following the year of inactive status, he may be considered for re-election by the Church.
- E. A deacon from a church of like faith and order does not automatically become a deacon at Grace Fellowship Baptist Church but may be elected after at least six (6) months, if they unite by letter.
- F. Any person elected to the office of deacon must have been a member of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church for at least twelve (12) months if they unite by baptism.
- G. Any deacon who has served the church faithfully, but can no longer serve in an active capacity, may be made a Deacon Emeritus by a vote of the Church.
- H. Termination: A deacon may resign from active status (or "active service to the Church") by giving thirty (30) days notice to the Church. The Church may remove an active deacon in like manner, following a three-fourth's (3/4's) majority vote of the membership present and voting at a business meeting called at least two weeks in advance for that purpose

## SECTION IV: **Trustees**

- A. A minimum of Four (4) trustees elected by the Church will hold in trust the church property.
- B. Trustees shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Church by a three-fourth's (3/4's) majority vote of the membership present and voting in a duly authorized business meeting. Trustees shall be elected for a term of three (3) years unless elected to fill an unexpired

term or when a shorter term is necessary to maintain a balanced rotation system. The terms of office of the trustees shall be concurrent with the church year. Trustees shall serve on a three (3) year rotating basis, with one new trustee being elected every church year.

- C. The Trustees are the legal representatives of the Church. They shall sign for the Church in all legal matters, be responsible for the care of all church property and insure adequate insurance coverage of the church property.
- D. The Trustees shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any property without a specific three-fourth's (3/4's) majority vote of the membership present and voting in a duly authorized business meeting to approve each action.

#### SECTION V: **Clerk**

- A. The clerk shall be presented annually by the Nominating Committee and elected by a three-fourth's (3/4's) majority vote of the church membership present and voting.
- B. The clerk shall:
  - 1. Be responsible to attend or be represented at all church business meetings.
  - 2. Keep an accurate record of all business transactions.
  - 3. Prepare the Annual Associational Letter and see that it is properly transmitted to the Associational Clerk.
  - 4. Issue letters of dismissal as authorized by the Church.
  - 5. Preserve a true history of the church, keeping same in a safe place.
  - 6. The clerk shall keep an accurate role of the church membership, the dates and methods of admission and dismissal, changing names, correct mailing addresses, and other pertinent information about each member.
  - 7. Understand that all church records are church property.

#### SECTION VI: **Treasurer**

- A. The treasurer shall be presented annually by the Nominating Committee and elected by a three-fourth's (3/4's) majority vote of the church membership present and voting.
- B. The Treasurer shall:
  - 1. Receive, retain in a financial institution and disburse, by check, upon proper authority, all money or negotiable instruments that are given to the treasurer.
  - 2. Keep, at all times, an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements, and render an account regularly to the church to be preserved by the Church Clerk.
  - 3. Submit a monthly printed itemized financial statement to the church.
  - 4. The Church financial records shall be reviewed at the close of each fiscal year by a committee elected by the Church or appointed by the moderator, or a professional auditor. The official findings of the financial review shall be reported in the May business meeting.

## ARTICLE IV: ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMITTEES

### GENERAL:

The Church shall sponsor organizations that contribute to the edification of the Church. Any organization claiming affiliation with or operating in the name of this church shall be subject to the final authority of the Church.

### SECTION I: Church Leadership Team

- A. A member of the Church Leadership Team must be a member of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church who displays continuing growth as a Christian, who utilizes Christian problem solving principles, possesses excellent communication skills and demonstrates reliability. This person must exhibit excellent people skills and display proficiency when working in a team environment. This person must be able to successfully balance the ability to be a visionary, administrator, and manager. The Church Leadership Team member must have a biblical financial commitment to the church.
- B. The Church Leadership Team shall be composed of a minimum of five (5) members to a maximum of nine (9) members and shall be presented by the Nominating Committee in consultation with the church staff, and elected by three-fourth's (3/4's) majority vote of the church membership present and voting in a duly authorized business meeting. These individuals serve on a three (3) year rotating basis. Rotation will be decided by the Church Leadership Team in the initial election.
- C. The Pastor shall be the Chairman of the Church Leadership Team. In his absence, the Church Leadership Team will elect a chairperson.
- D. Responsibilities of the Church Leadership Team shall consist of:
  1. The Church Leadership Team will serve as the Pastor's advisor, and as a body to which the Pastor can bring concerns. Each member the Church Leadership Team must be accountable to each fellow member, and the Church Leadership Team will be accountable to the church body.
  2. The Church Leadership Team will oversee and provide guidance and direction to ensure that the church organizations and coordinators are achieving Church goals and purposes.
  3. The Church Leadership Team will function as a formal mediator within the Church and will draw from *Matthew* 18 as their guide for conflict resolution.
  4. The Church Leadership Team shall oversee the handling of church finances:
    - a. Receiving and disbursing of all funds.
    - b. Preparing a budget and submitting to the church for approval at least one month prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.
    - c. Planning and promoting stewardship.
    - d. Approving money counters.
    - e. Approving vendors and purchasing agents.
    - f. See that an annual financial review is performed.
  5. The Church Leadership Team shall outline the church calendar of activities assuring that no conflicts of scheduling occur. This calendar should be worked out as far in the future as possible.
  6. All major decisions, financial and otherwise, must be referred to the Church Body for approval.

## **SECTION II: Nominating Committee**

- A. The Nominating Committee for the coming church year shall consist of at least five (5) members, one member being the Sunday School Director; four (4) members shall be appointed by the Moderator, or if the moderator declines, the Church Leadership Team shall select this committee.
- B. The Nominating Committee for the upcoming year will present a slate of nominees to the Church for election at the regular business meeting of the church in September.
- C. This committee will present a slate of nominees, in writing, for each office not otherwise provided for in the By-laws at least one (1) week prior to the regular September business meeting.
- D. The committee will be responsible for presenting nominees for any unfilled offices, subsequent vacancies, and newly created position, not otherwise provided in the By-laws, at any regularly scheduled business meeting; and elections may take place without prior notice.
- E. The Church year shall begin October 01 and end on September 30.
- F. The Fiscal year will begin January 01 and conclude December 31.

## **ARTICLE VI: MEETINGS**

### **SECTION I: Worship Services**

The Church shall maintain weekly worship services the number and hours of which are to be freely determined by the Church, as it deems necessary for its spiritual growth and outreach to the community.

### **SECTION II: Special Meetings**

The Church may conduct any additional services it regards as desirable for its growth and outreach.

### **SECTION III. Business Meetings**

- A. The Church shall hold business meetings on the third Wednesday of each uneven month of the year.
- B. The Church may call a special business meeting to take care of any urgent business at any time, provided an announcement is made by the Moderator or Church Leadership Team as to the time and purpose of the meeting in two Sunday services. Time, place, and specific purpose of the meeting must be stated. Only the stated business topic(s) can be acted upon at the said meeting.
- C. Those members present and voting shall constitute a quorum at a regular or special business meeting (see Paragraph B).
- D. All business considered by the Church Body shall be decided by a majority vote of the members present and voting unless otherwise specified in the Constitution and its By-laws.
- E. This Church shall conduct its meetings under parliamentary procedures as outlined by Robert's Rules of Order.

## ARTICLE VII: **ADOPTION, VALIDATION AND AMENDMENTS**

### SECTION I: **Adoption**

These By-laws shall be considered adopted and in immediate effect when ratified by a two-thirds (*2/3's*) majority vote of the members present and voting in a duly called business meeting.

### SECTION II: **Validation**

A copy of these By-laws shall be kept by the Clerk at all times among the clerk's records; another copy shall be kept in the church office and all amendments to, or revisions thereof, shall be prepared by the clerk and attached to copies of the Constitution and By-laws and available to church members.

### SECTION III: **Amendments**

The **By-Laws** may be amended by a two-thirds (*2/3's*) majority vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting provided the amendment has been offered in writing and distributed at a morning worship service at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of vote.

The **Constitution** may be amended by a two-thirds (*2/3's*) majority vote of members present and voting provided the amendment has been offered in writing at the previous annual business meeting (a 12-month notification of change is required).