

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Grace Bible Church, do hereby organize ourselves and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the standards set forth in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith.

ARTICLE I

Name and Location of Offices

The name of this Church is Grace Bible Church of Fulton, Mississippi. It is a Mississippi nonprofit religious Corporation with its principal offices in Fulton, Mississippi.

ARTICLE II

Purpose

This church is organized for exclusively religious purposes (including charitable and eleemosynary purposes common to a pastoral church ministry as defined by Scripture). Our commission is summarized as follows: “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’” (Matthew 28:18-20).

ARTICLE III

Statement of Faith

This church acknowledges the Holy Scriptures as God's very Word and the supreme, entirely sufficient, and final authority for our faith and practice. Therefore, it alone and entirely is our only binding creed. We believe the Bible in its entirety is God's written Word to man, free of error in its original autographs, wholly reliable in history, science, and doctrine. Its Divine inspiration has rendered the Bible infallible, thus incapable of teaching deception, and inerrant, thus impossible to be proven false or mistaken. Grace Bible Church of Fulton, Mississippi, chooses the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 for its statement of faith to express how we understand and interpret the Bible. We find it to be a confirmation of faith, a means of edification, an aid in controversy, and a basis for maintaining church unity. We also affirm the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” (1978). However, we acknowledge without hesitation or reservation that the Scriptures alone are God-inspired and, therefore, must be the supreme authority in all matters of belief and practice.

ARTICLE IV
Membership

Section I: The General Statement

Grace Bible Church of Fulton, MS, is an autonomous, congregational, Elder-Led Baptist church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of this church's spiritual and temporal life. The membership, led by the elders, reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be a member of this church and the conditions of such membership.

Section II: The Warrant for Church Membership

A genuine Christian's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ is inseparable from his commitment to His truth and His people. This commitment ordinarily requires a formal, open, voluntary, solemn, and enduring commitment to membership in a local church. Following are some proofs of the existence of the local church which Christ ordained for His own glory and worship, and also for the spiritual benefit of His people, which shows the warrant for every true Christian to seek membership therein:

- (1) The New Testament presents the local church as a distinct and defined group of individuals covenanted together to worship God and carry out the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ. The local church is made up of individuals who may be counted (Acts 2:41,42; Acts 4:4), added to (Acts 2:47; 5:14), and even subtracted from (Mat 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:12,13; 2 Cor. 2:6).
- (2) Each local church of Christ is called upon to select leaders and representatives from among itself (Acts 6:1-6; Acts 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19,23), thus making it a formal organization with recognized officers (Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23).
- (3) Fulfillment of the great commission requires church membership (Mat 28:18-20). In this commission, there is an inseparable connection between making disciples, baptizing them, and then teaching them all things that Christ has commanded. It is clear from the Scriptures that the Apostles implemented this commission by gathering baptized disciples into local churches where they were taught all the things that Christ had commanded (Acts 2:38-42; 1 Cor. 4:1-7; Titus 1:7).
- (4) The whole of the New Testament presents a picture of disciples of Christ worshipping and serving Him in connection with some local church. We believe this is what Christ intends for His disciples to the end of the age.

Section III: Duties of Church Members

Members of Grace Bible Church of Fulton are expected to:

- (1) First and foremost, have a good confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- (2) Have obeyed the Lord Jesus in the ordinance of believer's baptism;
- (3) Be faithful in all the duties essential to the Christian life;
- (4) Attend regularly the stated worship services, unless providentially hindered.
- (5) Submit cheerfully to the eldership of the church (Heb. 13:7);
- (6) Give cheerfully to its support and its causes as God has prospered them.
- (7) Participate in its organized work and make available talents and abilities to the church as God has endowed them with.

Section IV: How to Join Grace Bible Church of Fulton

Any person may offer to be a candidate for membership in Grace Bible Church of Fulton. We understand the Scriptural priority of serving the Lord in one of His churches and therefore welcome any and all persons who are Biblically qualified to join with us. However, we also recognize the vital importance of keeping the Lord's church sound in doctrine, holy in practice, and unified in Spirit. Therefore, we desire all potential members to understand and meet those biblical qualifications.

Members are to be received only upon the recommendation of the elder(s) and by the church's consent.

The method of receiving members into Grace Bible Church of Fulton will be according to the following steps:

Step 1: An initial interview with a pastor in the church and attending the membership information class for the following reasons:

A. To ascertain by the applicant's testimony, with as much certainty as possible, that the proposed member knows the way of salvation and has a personal saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is necessary because we believe that church membership is for true believers only.

B. To make sure that the proposed member understands and is in general and substantial agreement with the doctrinal beliefs of our church. To achieve this purpose, the prospective member will need to become familiar with the confession of this church. It is not expected that every new member (especially a recent convert) understands all the doctrines we believe, but

there must be a general soundness in faith, and a humble willingness to learn God's truth, together with a determination not to sow any discord in the church with regard to any doctrinal matters in which the prospective member might be in disagreement with the church.

C. To make sure that the proposed member understands what is expected of members of the church. These expectations will include:

- (1) Regular attendance at all the stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered.
- (2) Promoting the unity and spiritual well-being of the church through such things as a scriptural relationship with other members, adherence to biblical truth, and submission to the care, oversight and leadership of the pastors.
- (3) A godly, separated life that will promote the honor of Jesus Christ, His religion, and His church.
- (4) A commitment to godly church discipline as explained in Section V.

It is probable that, in most cases, the accomplishment of the above goals will entail more than one meeting with the pastor(s) and may take more time than most churches do to bring new members into formal church membership. However, the importance of Christ's church and the seriousness of membership therein demands careful consideration before adding members to the church.

Step 2: When the pastoral interview process and church membership class have been satisfactorily completed, then the membership candidate will be presented before the church for formal membership. This process will include the following:

- A. A formal announcement to the church of the desire of the candidate(s) to become a member.
- B. A formal announcement of completing the church membership class.
- C. A formal request to receive candidates as members based on the vetting process of meeting with the elders and completing the membership class.

Section V: Termination of Membership

As with receiving members, biblical principles must govern the termination of church membership. Accordingly, membership in Grace Bible Church of Fulton will be terminated in one of the following ways:

- (1) Death – Upon death of any member, his/her name shall be automatically removed from the church membership.
- (2) Transfer of Membership to another local church – Any member in good standing is entitled to receive, upon request, dismissal to another local assembly of believers true to the Word of God. The phrase “good standing” refers to a member who has made an honest effort to live for Christ and is not under church discipline. If we receive information that a member in good standing has joined another local assembly, he/she shall be removed from membership whether official notice has been received. The congregation will be informed of this action.
- (3) Exclusion
 - a. Exclusion, not under discipline - In some cases, a person’s membership may need to be terminated for reasons which, in the judgment of the church, may not warrant discipline. Such cases may include the resignation of a member who concludes that he is not a Christian; the resignation of a member who requests to be relieved from his church covenant obligations for reasons that the church or its Elders may deem satisfactory; or the relocation of a member who no longer remains in contact with the church. The church shall exclude such persons from its membership role without the exercise of church discipline.
 - b. Exclusion by ex-communication - According to Holy Scripture, a church must exclude from its membership any person who persists in holding or teaching serious doctrinal heresies, or who persists in conduct which is either publicly scandalous or blatantly inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of the church (Matt. 18:15; 1 Cor. 5:1 ff; Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10, 11).

Excommunication should ordinarily be a last resort of the church and often should not be exercised until milder forms of biblical discipline have been meekly, lovingly, and prayerfully utilized in a sincere effort to restore the offending member. Such restorative efforts may include public verbal reproof (Mat. 18:17; 1 Tim. 5:20) and temporary suspension of certain privileges of church membership, such as the right to vote or participate in the Lord's Supper (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 Thess. 3:6,14).

When other scriptural means of restoring an offender have failed, the church must be willing to excommunicate an offending member (Mat. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:13). Persons may be excommunicated only by a majority vote of the church (2 Cor. 2:6). As stated above, excommunication should ordinarily be a last resort. However, since some cases of sin (either moral or doctrinal) are so scandalous, gross, and heinous in their nature, the church has a Scriptural right and mandate to immediately excommunicate those guilty of such sins if the honor of Christ and His church necessitate this.

- c. All acts of church discipline, including excommunication, must be lovingly carried out for the glory of Christ, the welfare and purity of the church (1 Cor. 5:6), with the goal of eventually restoring the offender to good standing in the church (2 Cor. 2:7).

Section VI: Restoration to Membership

Since full restoration is the goal of all church discipline, all church members should unite in its exercise when necessary, praying earnestly for God's gracious, restorative blessing upon those disciplined. It is also both the duty and privilege of the church to forgive and to restore to full membership a disciplined or excommunicated member upon satisfactory evidence of repentance (2 Cor. 2:6-8). Thus, any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored by vote of Grace Bible Church of Fulton, Mississippi, upon evidence of his or her repentance.

ARTICLE V Church Officers

Section I: General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church (Col. 1:18). He has ordained that individual churches be governed by Himself through officers whom He appoints, who are endowed by His Spirit, with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. These officers govern with due respect to the rights and liberties of the whole church set forth in the Scriptures (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Acts 6:1-7; 2 Cor. 2:6). Christ has ordained that local churches be led by elders and served by deacons. Besides the offices of elder and deacon, the Scriptures acknowledge no other offices which continue in the church today (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13).

Section II: General Prerequisites

1. All officers of this church must be members of this church.
2. Any individual set apart to one of these offices must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the church's confessions of faith and constitution. If he should at any time move from this agreement, he is under an immediate, spiritual, and moral obligation to make that fact known to the elders privately.
3. While we acknowledge the valuable gifts God has given to women and the wonderful assistance they may render to the church's officers (Rom. 16:1-6; Phil. 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:11), the Bible prohibits them from holding either the office of deacon or elder (1 Cor. 14:33b-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:1-7). Women, therefore, shall not be nominated, elected, or ordained to either of these offices in the church.

Section III: Elders

1. Those who have been called and equipped by God to lead and teach in the church are identified as elders, pastors, or overseers. These three names designate the same office in a New Testament Church (Acts 20:17; Eph. 4:11-12; Titus 1:5, 7).
2. Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence God's people of the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications set forth in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1-3; Titus 1:5-9).
3. Because the authority of the elders of the church is a human authority exercised in the house of God, it has both high prerogatives and important limitations:
 - a. It is divinely delegated authority. Thus, elders are answerable to God for exercising this authority (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). They are, therefore, obligated to discharge all the duties specified in the Scriptures in passages such as Acts 20:17-35, 1 Peter 5:1-4, and Hebrews 13:17.
 - b. When elders exercise this authority by requiring obedience to their leadership, they must seek to gain the consciences of God's people through the ministry of the Word (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17).
 - c. The authority of the elders does not include the right to make all decisions unilaterally. The Bible makes clear that decisions having to do with corrective discipline and the recognition of officers require the consent of the local church (Acts 6:2-6; 9:26; 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 13; 2 Cor 2:6). It is only fitting that other important matters such as the reception and exclusion of church members, the full support and involuntary removal of officers and major financial decisions be approved by the consent of the church. Nevertheless, the elders must provide definitive leadership to the church in the making of such decisions.
 - d. The authority of the elders is limited to the sphere of the local church. They may not require consequences for sin beyond those of church discipline, invade the spheres of other ordained human authorities (husbands, fathers, civil rulers and employers), or command God's people regarding matters not specified in Scripture (Matt. 22:21; Luke 12:13-14). They must, however, order the house of God by the application of His Word (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:3a; Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-6:9; 1 Cor. 7:25-28; 35-40).
 - e. The authority of elders is conditioned by the fact that they are themselves members of the local church. While elders are shepherds over the flock, they are also members of the flock. Therefore, each individual elder is entitled to the same privileges, is obligated by the same responsibilities and is subject to the same discipline as are all other members of the church. Thus, each individual elder is both under the oversight of his fellow elders and accountable to the church as a whole (Matt. 18:17; 23:9; 26:31; 2 Cor. 1 1:19-20; Gal. 2:11; 3 John 1:9-10).

- f. The authority of every elder (overseer or pastor) is the same. Thus, every elder has equal leadership in the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder, this diversity must never undermine real parity among the elders (Acts 20:28; Gal. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:17).
 - g. Finally, the authority of the elders is a very real authority. When it is Biblically exercised, God's people are required to submit this authority (Heb. 13:17).
- 4. Another crucial aspect of the duties of elders is exercising leadership with regard to the meetings and worship of the church. The elders shall appoint such meetings as they believe good for the spiritual health of the church and assure that they are conducted to the glory of God and according to the provisions of His Word.
- 5. While the New Testament clearly indicates that there may be elders who are not financially supported by the church, the elders who rule well, and especially those who labor in the Word and doctrine, will, when possible, be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts, the needs and capability of the church and the direction of Christ her Head (1 Tim. 5:17f).
- 6. Though a plurality of elders is the New Testament norm for every church, the New Testament does not specify the number of elders each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an elder's term of office. If, however, an elder fails to maintain the necessary scriptural qualifications, he may be removed from his office by the church with the consensus and leadership of the remaining elders.

Section IV: Deacons

- 1. Deacons are primarily responsible for assisting the elders in those practical aspects of ministry which would otherwise distract them from their priorities of the ministry of the Word, prayer, and shepherding. Such practical matters include the administration of benevolence, the maintenance and improvement of the church's facilities, the management of various business affairs, and the facilitation of ministries within the church (Acts 6:1-7).
- 2. The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall set apart according to its need men who evidence the scriptural qualifications for that office (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).
- 4. The church's elders shall present candidates for deacons at such time as necessary for the prayerful consideration of the church members. Members shall be allowed 6 months of vetting to inquire about the candidate's qualifications, reputation, and temperament for the office. After 6 months of evaluation, the church will vote on the nominated candidates.
- 5. The qualifications of deacons are explained in 1 Timothy 3:8-12 and are as follows:

1. **A deacon is self-controlled in speech, appetites, and actions** (1 Tim. 3:8; see also 1 Tim. 3:11). According to Paul, deacons must be “dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.”
2. **A deacon is sound in the faith** (1 Tim. 3:9). Deacons must “hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience,” which means that they must have a firm grip on the truths of the gospel and live consistently with those truths.
3. **A deacon has been tested** (1 Tim. 3:10). Paul writes, “Let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.” Practically, this means that deacons should have a proven track record of faithful service before they are appointed to the office of deacon.
4. **If married, a deacon is faithful to his spouse** (1 Tim. 3:12). **If single, the deacon must honor Christ with his body** (1 Cor. 6:18-19).
5. **A deacon manages his children and household well** (1 Tim. 3:12). Does the way he manages his household indicate that he will faithfully serve the church’s needs? The basic message is that deacons are to be Christians whose trustworthiness, self-control, and soundness in the faith shows that they are able to be trusted (i) to faithfully care for the church’s physical needs and (ii) to serve as an example of faithful service to others.

Section VI: Appointment of Officers

1. General Statement

The appointment of elders and deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. However, He has ordained that they be formally recognized by the consent of the particular church they serve. Elders and deacons are ordained to office by the laying on of hands by the eldership (1 Tim. 4:14). This is an expression of approval for which the elders are responsible (1 Tim. 5:22). Therefore, each officer must have the approval, not only of the church as a whole, but of the eldership in particular. The Lord's appointment of an individual to either of these offices is recognized by means of that individual's possession of those graces and gifts required by Scripture for the particular office, and his own conviction that the Lord is calling him to minister in that office. The recognition of officers is a matter of such importance that it should never proceed without much prayerful waiting upon God, careful consideration of the relevant passages of Scripture, and thorough evaluation of those persons being considered. Each member of the church has a responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding these matters.

2. Procedure of Appointment

The recognition of those whom the Lord has appointed to bear office in this church is carried out in three steps: nomination, election, and ordination.

A. Nomination

The members of the church are encouraged to express to the elder(s) (privately) their views concerning those whom Christ may be gifting for the office in the church. The elders will seriously consider the wisdom God gives to His church. However, since it is the elder(s) responsibility to lead the church, nominations to office are to be made by the eldership.

Those who are nominated will be announced to the church for evaluation. Members shall be allowed 6 months of vetting to inquire about the candidate's qualifications, reputation, and temperament for the office.

In the event that the assembly is either without an elder(s), or determines a need for an additional elder and a qualified and desirous man cannot be found within the assembly, the elder(s), or deacon(s) in the absence of an elder, shall be responsible to secure possible candidates

They shall interview and endeavor to hear them teach prior to recommendation to the congregation. Any member shall be free to recommend to the elder(s) possible candidate(s), but all invitations shall come from the elder(s) and/or deacon(s) alone. Further, the elder(s) and/or deacon(s) shall have the responsibility to notify the candidate of the church's decision regarding him.

Each candidate shall spend adequate time with the church corporately and individually as required to sufficiently familiarize the candidate with the membership and vice-versa.

The candidate shall be recognized formally as an elder when the congregation has affirmed him and shall follow the order of Section VI in appointing an elder.

B. Election

Any church meeting for the election of officers shall be announced on two Lord's Days before it is held. The names of all nominees shall be discussed and voted upon. The church should see unanimity concerning each nominee, but where unanimity is not realized, three-fourths of those ballots cast shall be required for election.

C. Ordination

Following an officer's election, a portion of a worship service shall be set aside at which time the officer-elect shall be ordained and installed into office by the laying on of the hands of the eldership. This solemn act should always be accompanied by the special prayers of the church (Acts 13:1-3). The laying on of the elders' hands shall signify their approval of an officer elect.

ARTICLE VI:
Church Government

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body but recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Baptist churches and will seek, insofar as is practical and scriptural, to maintain cooperation with other churches of Jesus Christ. A majority vote among members is usually all that is needed to pass any motion being voted on by the body. However, we recognize that some matters of great importance necessitate a greater percentage of agreement within the congregation to preserve the unity of the church. Such instances are either noted elsewhere in this document or will be determined on a case-by-case basis by a majority vote of the entire body. We will seek by prayer and searching of the Scriptures to discern the will of God in our church votes, realizing that we are dealing with matters that concern the work of God and the glory of God in His church.

This church believes in, and practices elder-led congregationalism by such Elders who have been duly elected and set apart by the church itself.

ARTICLE VII
Church Property

All property of this church is to be held for the use and benefit of those who are members thereof. This property is set apart to be used for the worship of God, the edification of His people, and any other use which *is* deemed necessary for the propagation of the gospel of Christ by this church and its leadership. Should any disagreements arise regarding the use of said property, such disputes shall be settled by majority vote of the members of this church. We agree together to seek Divine wisdom in the usage of this property for the glory of God, the good of His church, and the promotion of His truth, according to the Holy Scriptures.

ARTICLE VIII
Business Meetings

Section I: The Semi-Annual Business Meeting

The first semi-annual business meeting of the church shall be held in January or February of each year. The second business meeting will be held in July or August of each year. The elders at both business meetings shall also give an elder's report. The elders' report shall contain last year's financial report, and all the major (non-doctrinal) decisions for the upcoming year will be addressed for transparency and prayer. No vote will be taken, but all concerns and wisdom are warmly welcomed, for we seek to move forward together, maintaining the unity of the body in the bond of peace.

Section II: The Occasional Business Meetings

The pastors may call additional church business meetings. They may also be called by one-fourth of the voting members, provided they make a written request for such a meeting. In the latter case, this request must state the reason for the meeting, be signed by one-fourth of the members in good standing, and be presented to the pastors, who shall, in turn, make the proper announcement of the meeting, which shall be announced at regular services for at least two successive Lord's Days prior to the meeting. In cases that require urgent and/or immediate action, the Pastors may, at any time necessary, call for an informational meeting or for a vote of the church on any business that is urgent or time-sensitive.

Section III: Voting

All voting members should regard their presence at a duly called church meeting with the same seriousness and responsible churchmanship with which they would regard their attendance at any other meeting of the church. It shall be our goal to discern prayerfully the mind of God so that it may be said of us, as it was said of the church in Acts 6, that this "pleased the whole multitude." In situations where unanimity is not realized, except where the constitution requires a different proportionate vote, a simple majority of those voting will make a motion valid. The voting members present at any properly convened meeting of the church shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section IV: Clerk

The elders shall appoint a clerk from among the members of the church. The clerk's responsibilities will be to record all the business transacted by the church, collect all documents submitted to the church at its meetings and provide for the church and its elders a careful record of the church's business. This record shall be available to the church and its elders. The elders shall have the authority to replace the clerk whenever it seems wise.

Section V: Treasurer

The elders shall appoint a clerk from among the church members. The treasurer will collect, record, deposit, and account for all received offerings. The treasurer will also maintain a financial report, which will be available to the elders and church upon request.

ARTICLE IX

Missions

1. Priorities

This Church will endeavor to find and/or raise up missionaries and/or missionary organizations of like minded (including acts of charity). Members may recommend missionaries or missionary organizations following the procedure of 8:2. The final approval, however, is the sole authority and responsibility of the elder(s).

2. Requirements for Financial Assistance

Each missionary supported must have a clearly defined home church that recognizes their gifts, sends them out, and to whom they are directly accountable.

3. Joint Church Mission

We consider it proper and desirable to be involved in a missionary organization(s) representing a cooperative effort of like-minded churches.

ARTICLE X

Constitutional Authority

Section I: Nature

This constitution, like all merely human documents, may be fallible. It simply reflects an earnest and sincere attempt to apply the Scriptures in ordering the life of this local church. Furthermore, we as members of this church have solemnly committed ourselves to follow this constitution in ordering the life of this church.

Section II: Deficiencies

If at any time an elder or member of the church believes that adherence to the constitution would require a violation of the Word of God, he should make this known to the elders. If the elders conclude that Biblical principle requires an amendment of the constitution, they must communicate this matter in a timely way, submit relevant amendments to the church, and seek by church vote to amend the constitution.

Section III: Amendments

Proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be submitted to the elder(s) in writing. Upon their recommendation, they shall distribute copies of such proposals to the membership at least thirty (30) days prior to approval/disapproval of the amendment. Amendments to this constitution must be approved by all elder(s) and by three-fourths of those voting at any regular church meeting or a special meeting called for this purpose.

ARTICLE XI
Dissolution

This church shall be considered dissolved if its eldership concludes that it can no longer fulfill its hereto-stated purpose of existence. In the event of dissolution, no donor, member, officer of the church, or private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets of this church. Upon dissolution, any assets of the church shall be used to pay any outstanding debts. Any remaining assets shall be equally divided among the missionaries supported by the church at the time of dissolution. If no supported missionaries exist, the assets shall be given to another church of like faith and practice, holding to the summary of the *London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*.

Appendix I: Statement on Abortion

We believe that human life is created by God in His image and is, therefore, worthy of value and dignity. We affirm the sanctity of human life at all stages of development, from conception to natural death. Therefore, we believe that abortion is the unjust killing of an unborn child and a denial of God's desire for humanity to "be fruitful and multiply". We cannot, in good conscience, affirm abortion in any way. Children are a gift from the Lord and we seek to rejoice in the birth of children and mourn in the death of children.

Scripture Support: Gen. 1:27-28, 9:6, 25:21-22, Exodus 20:13, Deut. 5:17, Job 14:5-7, Psalm 39:4, 127:3, 139:13-15, Galatians 1:5)

Appendix II: Statement on Marriage

We teach that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children

spiritual and moral values and to lead them through consistent lifestyle, example, and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Scripture Support: Gen 2:21–25, 3:16; 1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:22–33; 1 Pet 3:1–7; Col 3:19–20

Appendix III: Statement on the Gospel

What It Means to Be a Christian

Being a Christian is more than identifying yourself with a particular religion or affirming a certain value system. Being a Christian means you have embraced what the Bible says about God, mankind, and salvation. Consider the following truths found in the Bible.

God Is Sovereign Creator

Contemporary thinking says man is the product of evolution. But the Bible says we were created by a personal God to love, serve, and enjoy endless fellowship with Him. The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Therefore, He also owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19). That means He has authority over our lives, and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship.

God Is Holy

God is absolutely and perfectly holy (Isaiah 6:3); therefore, He cannot commit or approve of evil (James 1:13). God requires holiness of us as well. First Peter 1:16 says, You shall be holy, for I am holy.

Mankind Is Sinful

According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin: There is no man who does not sin (1 Kings 8:46). That doesn't mean we're incapable of performing acts of human kindness. But we're utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own (Romans 3:10-12).

Sin Demands a Penalty

God's holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by eternal death (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23). That's why simply changing our patterns of behavior can't solve our sin problem or eliminate its consequences.

Jesus Is Lord and Savior

Romans 10:9 says, If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. Even though God's justice demands death for sin, His love has provided a Savior who paid the penalty and died for sinners (1 Peter 3:18). Christ's death satisfied the demands of God's justice, and Christ's perfect life satisfied the demands of God's holiness (2 Corinthians 5:21), thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him (Romans 3:26).

The Character of Saving Faith

True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin (Luke 13:3, 5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9), pursue Christ (Matthew 11: 28-30; John 17:3), and obey Him (1 John 2:3). It isn't enough to believe certain facts about Christ.

Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God (James 2:19), but they don't love and obey Him. True saving faith always responds in obedience (Ephesians 2:10).

Addendum

We believe that to preserve the function and integrity of Grace Bible Church, MS, as the local body of Christ and to provide a model of biblical faithfulness to its members as well as the community, all members, employees, and volunteers of Grace Bible Church of Fulton must agree with the principles laid out in the above statements on Marriage and Abortion in order to qualify for membership and involvement with the ministry. This is necessary to accomplish our biblical mission, goals, and purpose. Behavior or counter-witnessing that does otherwise will impede and burden our integrity and religious mission.

Scripture Support: Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:22.