



BY-LAWS OF WORD OF GRACE FELLOWSHIP **A DBA of BLUE RIDGE BIBLE CHURCH**

ARTICLE I

PURPOSE

Committed corporately and individually to obey and glorify God in all that is done, based on the command of Matthew 28:18-20, and the example of Acts 2:41-47, the purpose of WOGF is to:

- Gather to worship God as an assembly of believers,
- Develop interest and provide opportunities for unsaved people in our community and around the world to enter into a relationship with God through personal faith in Jesus Christ,
- Build spiritual maturity in believers and equip them to serve through the teaching of Scripture and ministry of the Holy Spirit,
- Minister to the spiritual, material, and emotional needs of fellow believers and the community,
- Fulfill the Great Commission and Great Commandments both through local outreach and foreign missions.

ARTICLE II DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

WE BELIEVE:

1. That the entire Bible is verbally inspired by God and in the original is infallible, and that its teaching and authority are absolute, supreme and final.
2. In one God eternally and co-equally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. That the Lord Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of Mary, a virgin, and is truly God and truly man.

4. That man was created in the image of God, that he sinned willfully and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, and that since the fall, all have been born with a sinful nature and are totally unable to achieve righteousness before God on their own.
5. That upon reaching the age of accountability or moral responsibility individuals become personally responsible before God for their soul's eternal destiny.
6. That the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the determinate foreknowledge of God, died for our sins according to the Scripture, that He arose from the dead according to the Scripture, that His sacrifice was substitutionary and is propitiatory for all the sins of all mankind.
7. That all who will receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior on the ground of faith alone in His shed blood are born again and partake of God's own nature through the Person of the Holy Spirit who dwells in all who are born again.
8. That after our Lord's personal bodily resurrection He ascended into Heaven and is there at the Father's right hand as our Intercessor and High Priest.
9. In the personal, premillennial and imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. In the eternal security of all who are born again.
11. In the bodily resurrection of the saved and of the lost; on the part of the saved, resurrection to eternal joy in the presence of God, and on the part of the lost, resurrection to eternal, conscious torment in Hell.
12. In the baptism in water by immersion as a step of obedience after regeneration, and as an outward symbol of what has been accomplished in the heart by the Holy Spirit.
13. In the Word of God, apart from all human interpretation, as the only authority on individual lives and the conduct in the assembly of the saved.
14. That Christ instituted the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper to be observed until He comes.
15. That it is the responsibility of all who are saved to seek to win others to Christ.
16. That the Church is the Body of Christ formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and that all believers are members thereof and are a holy and royal priesthood.
17. That Satan is a personal being, mankind's greatest enemy and tempter, the enemy of God, the accuser of the saints, the author of all false religions, the prince of the powers of spiritual darkness, and the god of this world.

ARTICLE III

We believe that the Bible in its sixty-six books is the only Word of God and is entirely sufficient for the believer's faith and practice.

ARTICLE IV

GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND MARRIAGE

God created human beings distinctly as male and female (Gen 1:27). The distinctness, complementarity, and relational nature of the human race as “male and female” is based on the created order given by God when He created humanity “in His image” (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:6; 1 Cor 11:7; Jam 3:9; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:23-24; Col 3:10), and these establish a normative connection between biological sex and gender. The created distinctness, complementarity, and relational nature also establish the basis for the marital relationship as being between one man and one woman (Gen 2:23-24; Eph 5:21-33).

The Bible affirms two options or giftings for sexual expression: monogamous marital relations between one man and one woman (Gen 1:27-28; 2:18, 21-24; Mt 19:4-6; Mk 10:5-8; 1 Cor 7:7; Heb 13:4; Eph 5:22), or sexual celibacy, if one is not in a monogamous marital relationship between one man and one woman (1 Cor 7:7; Mt 19:12). Within these two Biblical designs there can be found sexual fulfillment, whereas outside these two designs sexual expression is improper.

The Bible affirms that human sexuality is a gift to be treasured and enjoyed (Gen 2:24; Prov 5:19, 31:10; 1 Cor 7:4), as is sexual celibacy (1 Cor 7:7). The fall of humanity (Gen 3) corrupted human sexuality in both spiritual and physical ways (Rom 1:18-32, Eph 2:1-10), and one result is confusion and pain in the lives of those who struggle with brokenness regarding gender, and who struggle with the guilt of desiring sinful expressions of sexuality (Gen 3:1-7; Rom 3:9-18; 5:12-17). The Bible prescribes faith in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:2-3) as the remedy for guilt and as the provision for life (Rom 3:23, 6:23; Jn 3:16), and the Bible prescribes an ongoing relationship with Him as the means for a whole and fulfilling life (Jn 15:1-11, 17:3; Col 3:16; Gal 5:16-25; Rom 8:28-38).

CHARISMATIC GIFTS

We believe that while all true believers have been provided with one or more spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:11), certain of the gifts enumerated in the New Testament were pertinent only to the day when there was not as yet a completed written revelation. Among the gifts no longer pertinent are tongues (and their interpretation), miracles and healing through specially endowed individuals.

ARTICLE V

WORLDLINESS

In these days of worldliness among professing Christians, it is necessary that we call the attention of believers to the plain teaching of God's Word concerning this: "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. "And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

"It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles." (Romans 14:2 1).

The above Scriptures plainly indicate that the child of God is to refrain from any unequal yokes, entangling alliances, or questionable practices which will hinder their influence or harm their weaker brother or sister.

ARTICLE VI

MISSIONS

We believe that the Scriptures clearly teach that the church's responsibility is to evangelize the unsaved - Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:20; Acts 1:8. We desire to be involved by the Lord in this missionary enterprise and thus be His instruments in taking out a people for His name from among the nations of earth. We recognize the place of the local church in praying for missions, giving to missions and setting apart those whom the Lord has called to take the Gospel to the regions near and beyond.

ARTICLE VII MEMBERSHIP

SECTION A

Any person making a personal confession of Jesus Christ as Savior either before the Church Board or leadership, giving evidence of a genuine experience of regeneration, and subscribing to the statement of faith and constitution of this church shall be given the opportunity of membership in the church.

SECTION B

All persons applying for membership will be examined by a group comprised of one or more Elder(s) and/or Deacons and will be required to attend an instruction class prior to their being received into membership.

SECTION C

As is stated in our statement of faith under Article II, we believe in water baptism by immersion for all believers (unless physically unable). This shall be the only mode taught and practiced by this church. In ordinary cases immersion will be required of all who join this church. Exceptions may be made where an earnest believer has been baptized by some other mode and is satisfied that he/she has received biblical baptism after counseling with a member of the pastoral staff.

SECTION D

Associate membership with full voting rights may be granted to persons who meet the membership requirements as set forth in Sections A, B and C of this article.

1. Associate membership shall be considered for persons whose circumstances place them in this area on an extended yet temporary basis who desire to retain membership in a distant church.
2. Associate members are not eligible to hold elective office but may vote, serve on committees, teach, etc.

SECTION E

Pastoral staff and their wives are members by reason of their position.

SECTION F

Persons relocating outside the area so that participation in the church services is no longer feasible will be retained on the membership roll until the first annual meeting following their relocation. Exceptions may be made by the Board.

ARTICLE VIII DISCIPLINE

SECTION A

The primary goal of the disciplinary process hereinafter described shall be to restore to full fellowship the brother or sister who is the object of discipline. We believe that the Scripture establishes the attitude which the church must take when entering into the exercise of its disciplinary responsibility (Galatians 6:1).

SECTION B

Members or regular attendees who are found to be conducting themselves in a manner contrary to New Testament teaching or who are propagating heretical doctrines will be approached by two or more Elders in the manner set forth in Matthew 18:15-17. If the offending individual responds favorably to the counsel and admonition provided, and indicates true repentance, no negative action will be necessary. Additional pastoral counseling or other positive disciplinary actions deemed appropriate may be recommended by the Board. If, however, there is not a favorable response the Board may recommend excommunication to the membership. An eighty percent (80%) majority vote of those members present at a properly convened business meeting is required for such action.

Any individual thus disciplined may be received back into fellowship after demonstrating true repentance, and making a public statement before the church acknowledging the wrong and his/her intention to go on with the Lord.

SECTION C

The active membership roster shall represent individual members in good standing who are currently attending this church.

SECTION D

Officers and Pastoral Staff shall conduct themselves in a manner commensurate with their office, their responsibilities and in accordance with the character standards presented in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. If they conduct themselves to the contrary they shall be counseled or admonished according to Matthew 18:15-17. Disqualifying conduct shall result in a request by the Board that the individual resign. This action shall not preclude further disciplinary action should circumstances warrant.

ARTICLE IX

OFFICIAL CHURCH BOARD

SECTION A

The government of this church is vested in its voting membership executed through the Official Church Board (also known as the corporation Board of Directors). Any reference in these By-laws to "Board" shall mean the Official Church Board.

SECTION B

The Official Church Board shall be composed of no fewer than five individuals. Each Board member shall have an equal vote. Perpetual Board members may include any of the Pastors (pursuant to Article X, Section B), the Deacon Chairman, either the Church Treasurer or the Chairman of the Finance Committee, and two congregational members in good standing (selected annually by the Elders) and shall include no less than three and no more than six active Elders (selected annually by the Elders). At all times elders are to comprise a majority of the Board.

SECTION C

Annually the Board shall elect a chairman (President), vice-chairman (Vice-President) and a secretary. The chairman and vice-chairman shall be Elders, but not Pastoral Staff. The chairman shall be moderator of all Board meetings. The same elder cannot serve as chairman more than 3 consecutive years at a time. The secretary shall keep a record of all the business conducted in the Board meetings. The Board may appoint a recording secretary as staff.

SECTION D

The Board shall meet as often as necessary to conduct business and govern the Church, but no less often than four times a year. Other meetings may be called by the Senior Pastor or the Board chairman, or may be requested by other board members as necessary and called by the Senior Pastor or the Board chairman.

SECTION E

The Board cannot incur any financial obligation for the church in excess of 1% of the budget annually if said amount was not in the approved financial plan. The Board cannot buy, sell, or transfer any property valued in excess of 1% of the budget annually without authorization of church membership. The church board shall not acquire any financial obligation in excess of one month without the authorization of church membership.

SECTION F

The Board shall have the authority to appoint church members or committees to assist in the transaction of its business, including the hiring of staff reporting directly to the Board and subject to the ratification of the church membership for full-time positions.

SECTION G

Board members may not be members of other boards in which it is generally deemed that there could be a conflict of interest or that could result in a negative impact for their primary focus on the church or compromise their role in any form.

ARTICLE X

CHURCH OFFICERS AND THEIR DUTIES

SECTION A

Senior Pastor. The Pastor helps provide direction and spiritual leadership to the church, is general overseer of the work of the church, serves as teacher and faithful proclaimer of the Word of God and directs pastoral and other church staff. He will hold the rank of an Elder of the church. The duties of the Senior Pastor shall be to preach the Word of God, watch over the spiritual welfare of the congregation, lead the public worship

services, administer the ordinances and generally administer the affairs of the church. He shall be an ex officio member of all committees with voting privileges.

SECTION B

Other Pastoral Staff. Pursuing their areas of specialization these individuals are responsible to the Senior Pastor unless otherwise noted. With the Senior Pastor they shall provide leadership, train the laity, assist in public worship services, administer their area of specialization and set a positive spiritual example for the congregation. They shall be eligible to be considered for Eldership subject to Section D of this Article.

SECTION C

Any member of the Pastoral Staff may terminate their service by a written resignation or may be removed from office by an eighty percent (80%) majority vote of the members present at a duly called congregational meeting.

SECTION D

Elders. The Elders shall, with the Pastor(s), be the overseers of the church and have particular responsibility for the spiritual welfare and direction of the church. Their duties include overseeing the spiritual life of the church, including doctrine, teaching, counseling, and worship, interviewing candidates for membership, assisting at baptismal services and the Lord's Supper, visiting the sick, sorrowing and indifferent, and administering matters of church discipline.

1. There shall be nine or more Elders who shall normally hold this office for six year active terms, providing they remain members of this church in good standing. Elders shall take a sabbatical year in inactive status every seventh year. Following the sabbatical they shall resume active status if they so desire.
2. Prospective Elders shall be nominated and recommended by the active Elders for ratification by vote by the members. Recommendations for elders may be made by the congregation to current elders. The candidate shall meet the Biblical qualifications for this office as stated in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Generally to be eligible for Elder an individual shall have served at least one year as a Deacon.

SECTION E

Deacons. The Deacons shall function in an administrative and operational capacity under the oversight and direction of the pastor, subject to Board policies. Specific areas of responsibility include visiting the sick and sorrowing, contacting absentees, recommending benevolent assistance, assisting in community outreach, maintaining church property, financial management, assisting with serving the Lord's Supper, and greeting worshipers.

1. There shall be six or more Deacons, all chosen by the Church Nominating Committee as described in Article XI.
2. Deacons serving for the first time shall serve for a one year term. Without circumstances to the contrary, they may then be additionally ratified to a two year term. Subsequent regular terms shall be three years. They may serve in office for no more than six consecutive years.
3. Candidates must meet the Biblical qualifications for this office as stated in Acts 6 and I Timothy 3.

SECTION F

Treasurer. Serving as a Deacon, he shall be elected by church members on an annual basis, chosen in the manner prescribed in Article XI. He shall meet the requirements for Deacon as stated in Acts 6 and I Timothy 3 and may serve in office no more than six consecutive years. He shall administer the financial accounts of the church, disbursing church funds and keeping an accurate record thereof. He shall submit monthly and annual reports to the Church Board and congregation. In the event that the treasurer resigns or is unavailable to serve, the elders shall recruit and appoint an individual to serve in an interim capacity till the next annual meeting or a duly called business meeting.

SECTION G

Clerk. A Clerk will be requested and appointed by the board to keep a record of all business transacted at the congregational meetings. The Clerk does not serve on the Church Board.

SECTION H

Other. Other positions may be added as needed pursuant to the other requirements defined within this document.

SECTION I

Indemnification. For purposes of corporation law, all board members and elected Elders and Deacons are considered as directors or officers of the Blue Ridge Bible Church Corporation.

1. Each director or officer, whether or not then in office, shall be indemnified by the Corporation against all costs and expenses reasonably incurred by, or imposed upon him or her in connection with, or arising out of any action, suit or proceeding in which he or she may be involved or to which he or she may be a party, by reason of his or her being or having been a director or officer of the Corporation, such expense to include the cost of a reasonable settlement made with a view to curtailment of the costs of litigation.
2. The Corporation, however, shall not indemnify any director or officer with respect to matters as to which he or she shall have finally been adjudged in such action, suit or proceeding to have been grossly negligent in the performance of his or her duty as such director or officer, or for conduct found to be intentional, wanton or willful conduct. The foregoing right of indemnification shall not be exclusive of any rights to which any director or officer may be entitled by law.

ARTICLE XI SELECTING CHURCH OFFICERS

SECTION A

Selection of all elected officers (excluding Elders, Board members, Board-appointed positions, and congregational representatives on the Nominating Committees) shall be made utilizing a nominating committee process.

1. Church Nominating Committee: Prior to a designated business meeting of the congregation, the Board shall solicit and receive from the congregation, candidates who are church members but not on the Church for nomination to the Church Nominating Committee. The Board shall select two from these nominees to recommend to church membership for ratification by majority vote to serve on the Church Nominating Committee. The Church Board will also appoint one Elder and one Deacon to serve on this committee. Along with the Senior Pastor these five individuals comprise the Church Nominating Committee. This committee's term shall be one year.

SECTION B

Following formation of the Nominating Committee, announcement shall be made to the congregation of offices to be filled. The congregation shall have thirty (30) days from that announcement to submit suggestions for the various offices.

SECTION C

Only church members eighteen (18) years of age and above shall be considered for elective church office. The Nominating Committee shall thoroughly investigate the character of all potential nominees in accord with the character standards recorded in Acts 6 and I Timothy 3. The Board in the general instructions to the Nominating Committees may stipulate any additional skills or experience required for a particular office. Only one nominee is to be recommended for each position to be filled and there must be unanimous nominating committee agreement on nominees.

SECTION D

Prior to contacting nominees for their assent to serve, the Church Nominating Committee will advise the Church Board of the persons being considered for specific office and take any Board comments into consideration. All information received on nominees shall be tested against Matthew 18:15-17 for its propriety. Hearsay and rumors shall not be considered.

SECTION E

All nominees must affirm that they are in agreement with the Church doctrinal position and by-laws.

SECTION F

The Nominating Committees shall report to the congregation the results of their deliberations. The slate of recommended nominees is to be published for at least two (2) Sundays prior to the congregational meeting when the election is to be held.

SECTION G

Member ratification of those nominees who are church members requires at least an eighty percent (80%) affirmative vote of the voting members present at the congregational meeting.

SECTION H

All elected officers and committee appointments will begin their term of service as of August 1.

ARTICLE XII

FINANCIAL MATTERS

SECTION A

All giving is to be directed to the primary treasury and then dispersed accordingly per budget requirements or as designated by the channeled offering.

SECTION B

Channeled gifts are to be considered gifts in excess of the missions financial plan and are to be so disbursed. Channeled gifts will be forwarded only to individuals or organizations on the current missionary support list.

SECTION C

The Pastoral Staff will lead the preparation for a realistic and sound financial plan for all church expenditures. Elders will provide oversight of staff salaries.

SECTION D

The church fiscal year shall be from July 1 through June 30.

SECTION E

In lieu of professional accounting that results in certified financial reports, the Board may appoint a qualified auditor to verify all financial records of the church. Audits can be requested at any time as directed by a majority decision of the voting members at a duly called congregational meeting.

SECTION F

All persons who are authorized to have direct access and power to disburse church finances shall be limited to elders, deacons, board members, and staff.

ARTICLE XIII CHURCH BUSINESS MEETINGS

SECTION A

The Annual Meeting of the church shall be held not earlier than the second Sunday evening in July each year. At this meeting all church offices with expiring terms shall be filled by vote of the membership.

SECTION B

A regularly scheduled business meeting of the church shall also be held in January on a date not earlier than the second Sunday evening.

SECTION C

Special meetings may be called by the Senior Pastor or Church Board chairman providing public announcement has been made at two separate services, preferably a week apart.

SECTION D

Only members in good standing and eighteen (18) years of age or older may vote in congregational meetings or hold office in the church. Article VI, Section D, paragraph 2 is the only exception to the above.

SECTION E

Meetings will be conducted "decently and in order." Robert's Rules of Order will be followed in all meetings.

SECTION F

The Church Board chairman or whomever he designates shall conduct all church business meetings.

ARTICLE XIV

CALLING STAFF

SECTION A

Senior Pastor. When a Pastor is needed the Church Board shall appoint a Search Committee. It will be their responsibility to contact, examine and bring prospective candidates to the attention of the Church Board. The Church Board shall determine whether these persons shall be asked to become candidates for the vacant position.

SECTION B

After a candidate has had adequate exposure to the Church Board and congregation, the Board shall recommend to church membership that the individual be given a call provided at least eighty percent (80%) of the Board agrees with such action.

SECTION C

A candidate will be extended a call only if at least eighty percent (80%) of the voting members present at a duly called congregational meeting agree with such action utilizing a secret ballot.

SECTION D

Other Pastoral Staff. The Senior Pastor shall with the advice and consent of the Board, with ratification of the church membership, find and appoint other ministerial staff. They shall be responsible to the Senior Pastor unless otherwise noted.

SECTION E

Other Church Staff. The Senior Pastor, in conjunction with his Pastoral Staff, shall hire other paid staff as needed and for which financial provision is made in the approved financial plan. They shall be responsible to the Senior Pastor unless otherwise noted.

ARTICLE XVI ORDINATION

SECTION A

It shall be within the power of this church to ordain into the gospel ministry those men whom God has called and gifted. The Board shall have the authority, with the approval of church members, to call ordination councils. The Elders and Senior Pastor shall be represented on the ordination council. An affirmative recommendation of the council with Board approval shall result in a public ordination service.

SECTION B

No one shall be ordained who has not served at least six months in a specific ministry whose merit is recognized by the Church Board. The candidate must also show reasonable evidence of God's call to the Christian ministry. No one shall be ordained who fails to fully meet the requirements contained in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

SECTION C

Ordination credentials shall be removed from persons ordained by this assembly who no longer agree with Article II, III and IV of our doctrinal statement, or no longer satisfy the criteria found in I Timothy 3 or Titus 1, provided eighty percent (80%) of the voting members present at a duly called congregational meeting agree with such action. Prior to such a meeting the Church Board must have given the individual opportunity for a fair and impartial hearing.

ARTICLE XVII PROPERTY

SECTION A

This church may receive, accept, buy, own and operate such buildings, real and personal property and equipment as are required or deemed advantageous in carrying out its purpose as stated in Article I.

SECTION B

In the event the church should divide, from which may the Lord spare us, the property and all funds shall remain with those abiding by this constitution and doctrinal statement who will continue the work for which this church was originally formed.

SECTION C

In the event the church should dissolve, all material assets are to be sold and the funds dispersed per recommendation from the elders and ratification by church membership. Disbursement shall include, at a minimum, removing any debt, a disbursement to sustain missions, and staff severance. Ratification shall be at a duly called business meeting of the church with a simple majority vote of the active members in good standing present and voting.

ARTICLE XVIII UNAMENDABLE PROVISIONS

This organization shall at no time be changed from what we believe and hereto subscribe, and at no time shall any organized or unorganized group have any power over this organization to change or to make it into a church of any denomination. This article is not subject to amendment.

ARTICLE XIX AMENDMENT

This constitution may be amended or revised at a duly called business meeting of the church by an eighty percent (80%) majority vote of those members present and voting, provided the proposed amendment is published in the church bulletin on the Sunday prior to the business meeting.