



Constitution and Bylaws of Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church

Preamble

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants to unite here under the name Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church of Charleston, for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we, the members of Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church do hereby organize ourselves and adopt this Constitution and Bylaws 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 Statement of Faith and Covenant of this church.

Article 1 – Confessional Statement (Baptist Faith & Message 2000)

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right



hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.



C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors [elders] and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor [elder] is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.



IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.



XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on



the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

XVIII. The Family

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 of 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, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, 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.

Article 2 – Member Covenant

God, by His grace alone, has led me to repent of my sin and believe upon Jesus Christ, trusting Him alone as my Savior and Lord. As one who had been baptized as a believer in Christ and desiring to enter into a covenantal relationship with the members of this body of the Church, I agree to endeavor to abide by and participate in the following:

I agree to regularly attend and participate in the corporate worship services of Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church. (Acts 2:42, Heb. 10:25)

Believing that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, I agree to guard the truth and uphold the standards found in the Scriptures. Also, I understand and affirm **The Baptist Faith and Message** (2000).

I agree to wholeheartedly support, love, and care for the church's ministries and members by rejoicing in each other's happiness and with tenderness and sympathy, bearing each other's burdens – specifically in these areas: (1 Thess. 5:11, 1 Pet. 1:22, 4:8)

I agree to regularly pray for Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church, its leaders, members, and ministries. (2 Cor. 13:9; Eph. 1:15-20, 3:14-21, 6:18; Phil. 1:3-6, 9-11; Col. 1:3-12, 4:2-6; 1 Thess. 1:2-4, 5:17)

I agree to regularly and cheerfully give of my finances, as God blesses me, according to the biblical model. (Lev. 37:30, Malachi 3:10, Matt. 23:23, 1 Cor. 16:2, 2 Cor. 9:6-7, 1 Tim. 5:17-18)



I agree to be willing and available to serve Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church as needs are made known, where I see needs, and as I am able. I agree to endeavor to discover and put to use for Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church my spiritual giftings. (Matt. 20:26-28; Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 4:10)

I agree to boldly share my faith in Jesus Christ through the life I live, with my words and actions, to my family, friends, co-workers, and any others as God gives me opportunity. I agree to do this with love and sensitivity, with the desire to see everyone experience the love of Jesus. (Matt. 4:19, 28:19; Acts 1:8, 5:42; 1 Pet. 3:15)

I agree to pursue my personal spiritual growth and to strive to maintain the level of personal holiness required by our Savior. I will do this by regular times of personal prayer and Bible study. If I am the spiritual head of my household, I also agree to leading my household in regular prayer and Bible Study. I understand that the goal is that these things are a daily occurrence. (Matt. 5:6, 2 Cor. 7:1, 1 Thess. 4:7, 1 Pet. 1:15-16, 1 John 3:3)

I agree to do all in my power to defend and uphold the unity of the membership of Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church. This includes being a peacemaker and refraining from gossip and destructive speech. It also includes building friendships with other members, refraining from exclusive friendships groups (cliques) within the church, and welcoming new members and guests to various meetings and groups. In the event of a personal conflict, I will utilize the Grace on the Ashley Conflict Resolution Agreement. (Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18-21, 14:19; Eph. 4:1-3, 29-32; Phil. 2:1-4; Col. 3:12-14; 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 12:14)

I agree to respect, trust, and support the leadership of Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church in my words and actions. As outlined in the Church Conflict Resolution Agreement, I agree that if I have a concern or issue with a leader of Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church, I will go directly to that leader or a pastor first, and to no one else. (1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17-20; Heb. 13:7, 17)

I agree to humbly submit to the church's discipline, graciously repenting when approached about personal sin, and lovingly restoring others who become entangled in sin, striving for mutual accountability, knowing that the church is its members. (Matt. 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 5:6-13, 2 Cor. 6:14-18, Gal. 6:1, 1 Thess. 5:14-15, 2 Thess. 3:5-6, Eph. 4:29, Phil. 2:14)

Article 3 - Name

3.1 This body shall be known as Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church, Incorporated, 2014 Bees Ferry Road, Charleston, SC 29414.

Article 4 - Affiliations

4.1 Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church is voluntarily affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and the Charleston Baptist Association.

Article 5 - Purpose

5.1 The foundation of this church is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20), and He guides His church in all affairs through the Holy Scriptures (Psalm 119; 2 Tim. 3:15-17). Therefore the purpose of this church is to glorify God through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 43:7; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).



5.2 The priorities of ministry of this church flow from the vision of God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ. We exist to savor this vision in worship (John 4:23), strengthen the vision in nurture (1 Cor. 14:26; 2 Peter 3:18), and spread the vision in evangelism, missions, and loving deeds (Matt. 5:16; 28:18-20; 1 Pet. 2:9; 3:15).

5.3 In order to remain true to our Lord and His word, this church must be marked by preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 4:1-2), administering baptism (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:1-4) and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:17-34), loving one another (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:11-24; 4:7-12), and practicing formative (1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Tim. 5:1-2; Tit. 2:15) and corrective discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-5).

Article 6 - Membership

Section 1 - Qualifications

6.1.1 To qualify for membership in this church, a person

1. must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration,
2. who has been baptized in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration,
3. and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible.
4. Each member must sustain the doctrines of our church and not hold any settled convictions contrary to them, in accord with our Statement of Faith,
5. and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant.

6.1.2 The normal process for becoming a member is

1. completion of the New Members' Class,
2. an assessment of a person's qualification for membership in an interview with at least two elders (pastors),
3. and an affirmation by the entire church on the basis of the person's profession of faith.

Section 2 - Admission of Members

6.2 To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders (pastors) for admission and accepted by an affirmation of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members. At that point newly elected members shall relinquish their membership in other churches. Those applying for membership will be received as members by baptism or letter of transfer. A statement of faith may suffice in the event that a letter of transfer is not obtainable.

Section 3 - Duties and Privileges of Membership

6.3.1 In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Only those who are members of this congregation shall be entitled to lead in the ministries of the church.

6.3.2 It is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members' meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters submitted to a vote.

Section 4 - On Church Discipline



6.4.1 Formative discipline is inherent in the preaching, teaching, and exercise of other ministries in the church. When formative discipline fails due to sin, corrective discipline is then necessary. Corrective discipline is for the good of the church and the member who has sinned. It is never to be entered into lightly or quickly. The goal of corrective discipline is always remedial, that is, the goal is always the salvation and holiness and good of the one being disciplined.

6.4.2 Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders (pastors) and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of scripture. Church discipline, then, should only be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

6.4.3 The purpose of such discipline should be:

1. For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (Heb. 12:1-11; Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:1);
2. For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:20; Heb. 10:24-25);
3. For the purity of the church as a whole (1 Cor. 5:6-7; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 21:2);
4. For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (Matt. 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:10-14); and
5. Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (Deut. 5:11; John 15:8; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:12).

6.4.4 It is desirable in the case of public sin that a confession be made before the church in a specially called meeting, so that the church can freely extend forgiveness. Such public confession is especially necessary in the case of elders (pastors) and deacons/deaconesses (1 Tim. 5:19-20; Gal. 2:11-14).

Section 5 - Termination of Membership

6.5 Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following the death, transfer of membership, or voluntary resignation of any church member. Membership may be terminated as an act of church discipline by unanimous vote of the elder body followed by public announcement at any regular or special meeting of the members.

Article 7 - Meetings

Section 1 - Worship Meetings

7.1 Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.

Section 2 - Members' Meetings

7.2.1 In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7.2.2 There shall be a regular members' meeting at least every quarter, at some time apart from the Sunday morning service, and at a time acceptable to the membership. The elders (pastors) shall see that the stated



meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

7.2.3 Special members' meetings may be called as requested by the elders (pastors), or at the written request, submitted to the elders (pastors), of ten percent of the voting membership. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders (pastors) shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

7.2.4 There shall be an annual members' meeting, at which normally officers are elected, positions filled, and a budget approved by the membership no more than three nor less than one month prior to the start of the fiscal year. The fiscal year will commence on January 1.

7.2.5 The chairman of the elders (pastors) shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. In the absence or incapacity of the chairman of the elders (pastors), another elder appointed by the elders (pastors) shall perform these duties. The date, time, and purpose of any regular or special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church at least two weeks preceding the meeting. Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present.

7.2.6 Meetings shall be run according to Robert's Rules of Order. On any matter that is brought to vote, a two-thirds vote is needed for it to pass (unless this document specifies otherwise). Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast. Only votes cast by members present at the time of the meeting will be counted.

7.2.7 If all other notice requirements have been met, a quorum shall be the members present. Unless otherwise noted, all votes shall require a two-thirds majority.

Article 8 Officers

Section 1 - Summary

8.1.1 Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of this church and He rules primarily through the Scriptures.

8.1.2 The biblical offices in the church are elders (pastors) and deacons/deaconesses, but the church is ultimately governed by the congregation. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under this Constitution and Bylaws of clerk and treasurer. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2 - Elders (Pastors)

8.2.1 Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders (pastors) shall provide broad oversight to the ministry, financial management, and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17; Tit. 1:5-9; Jas. 5:14; and 1 Pet. 5:1-4, the elders (pastors) shall seek the mind of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the word of God as they undertake the work of shepherding God's flock. The elders (pastors) shall teach and exhort; refute those who contradict the truth; pray for the sick; care for the church's members; devote themselves to prayer, to the government of the church and to ministry. The elders (pastors) shall provide oversight of the congregation and lead the church to fulfill its ministries.



8.2.2 The elders (pastors) shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder (pastor) set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:6-9. Only men may serve as elders (pastors) in accord with 1 Tim. 2:12; 3:2 and in agreement with the Grace on the Ashley Church Elder Affirmation of Faith. (The Grace on the Ashley Church Elder Affirmation of Faith shall only be amended by a recommendation of the Council of Elders to the church, following the same procedure to amend the By-Laws. A majority of the active eldership shall be composed of church members not in the regular pay of the church. No elder (pastor) shall hold the office of deacon/deaconess during his tenure. Those elders (pastors) not receiving compensation from the church will be called “lay elders” for the purpose of this Constitution and Bylaws, although biblically and functionally there is no difference among the elders (pastors).

8.2.3 The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders (pastors). This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. After a lay elder (pastor) has served two consecutive three-year terms, he shall not be eligible for re-election to the eldership for at least one year.

8.2.4 An elder’s (pastor’s) term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder (pastor) should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders (pastors) and, if need be only afterwards, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matt. 18:15-17 and 1 Tim. 5:17-21. Any elder (pastor) may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any formally called members' meeting of the church.

8.2.5 The elders (pastors) shall take particular responsibility to oversee worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage and teach sound doctrine, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, mobilize the church for world missions, examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, and oversee the work of the deacons/deaconesses and appointed church agents and committees. The elders (pastors) are further to ensure that all who minister the word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

8.2.6 The elders (pastors) may establish and oversee ministry positions and committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders (pastors) shall also have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. The outworking of this responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to deacons/deaconesses or another staff member.

8.2.7 A paid or volunteer staff position does not in and of itself constitute an elder’s (pastor’s) position.

8.2.8 In proposing paid staff positions, the elders (pastors) shall present a job description for each position to the membership for approval. The Council of Elders may approve all candidates to fill such positions or may delegate this responsibility, on a position-by-position basis, to the deacons/deaconesses, or other staff members. The elders (pastors) may hire and fire ministerial and non-ministerial staff, or delegate that responsibility on a case-by-case basis.

8.2.9 The elders (pastors) may choose to operate among themselves by consensus, but they must have at least two thirds majority approval of the elders (pastors) in order to proceed with an action.



8.2.10 The elders (pastors) shall elect a chairman who shall serve as chairman of elders' meetings and as moderator of members' meetings. The chairman shall be a lay elder (pastor). In his absence, the elders (pastors) shall appoint another elder (pastor) to fulfill these duties.

8.2.11 The elders shall function as the Board of Directors as necessary for any legal purpose.

Section 3 - The Preaching Elder (Pastor)

8.3.1 The preaching elder(s)/pastors shall perform the duties of an elder (pastor) described in Section 2, above. He shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the ministry of preaching and teaching the word of God.

8.3.2 In the absence or incapacity of the preaching elder (pastor), the other elders (pastors) shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

Section 4 – Deacons/Deaconesses

8.4.1 The office of deacon/deaconess is described in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 (cf. Acts 6:1-7). The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, who possess gifts of ministry, and who are called to further service and care for the church's members. The number of deacons/deaconesses shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and the call and qualifications of men and women in the church. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons/deaconesses. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. After a deacon/deaconess has served two consecutive three-year terms, he or she shall not be eligible for re-election to the diaconate for at least one year.

8.4.2 Deacons/deaconesses shall advise and assist the elders (pastors) in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the word, new and existing ministries of the church, and the care of the members of the congregation. The deacons/deaconesses may be organized in the most fitting way to accomplish the mission of the church. Thus the ministry of deacons/deaconesses may involve several diaconal committees. There is no requirement that the deacons/deaconesses meet as a committee of the whole.

8.4.3 The responsibilities of deacons/deaconesses do not include preaching, teaching, or spiritual oversight, which are the responsibilities of the elders (pastors), or financial control of the church. Deacons/deaconesses exercise a ministry of service, not a ministry of spiritual leadership. Although they may teach and preach in contexts in which they are not infringing upon the oversight duties of elders (Acts 6-7:53; Titus 2:3), the responsibilities of deacons/deaconesses include the following:

1. The ministry of mercy is a particular responsibility of deacons/deaconesses. They shall see that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the infirm receive spiritual and physical comfort.
2. Deacons/deaconesses shall also attend to the benevolence ministries of the church. They shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders (pastors) at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.
3. Deacons/deaconesses shall attend to the accommodations for public worship. Deacons/deaconesses may assist in providing for the elements during the Lord's Supper.
4. Deacons/deaconesses shall attend to the normal care and maintenance of church properties.
5. Deacons/deaconesses shall attend to the welcoming and greeting ministries of the church.
6. Deacons/deaconesses of finance shall attend to the budgeting process of the church.



7. At the elders' (pastors') recommendation, the church may recognize deacons/deaconesses to serve in other specific capacities as needs arise in the church.

8.4.4 Each year the deacons/deaconesses of finance, with the approval of the elders (pastors), shall present to the church an itemized budget at the regular members' meeting preceding the annual members meeting. This budget shall be presented for discussion at that time and called up for a vote at the annual members' meeting.

8.4.5 No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders (pastors) or the deacons/deaconesses responsible for the church's finances.

8.4.6 A deacon shall be dismissed from service prior to the expiration of his term if his church membership is terminated for any reason or by removal of a majority of the elders.

Section 5 - Clerk

8.5.1 It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the elders (pastors), deacons/deaconesses, or the church.

8.5.2 In the absence or incapacity of the clerk, the elders (pastors) shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk.

8.5.3 The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this Constitution and Bylaws shall be available for all church members.

Section 6 - Treasurer

8.6 The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder (pastor) or a paid church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as designated by the church. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders (pastors) annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at regular members' meeting.

Article 9 - Elections

Section 1 - Principles

- 9.1 The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:
1. Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, shall be an integral part of the election process.
 2. Nominations shall proceed with the support of the elders (pastors).
 3. All candidates for church office shall be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members.



4. The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2 – Selection and Termination of Officers

9.2.1 The election of officers shall be held at the annual members' meeting of the church. Two months prior to the election the elders (pastors) should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process.

9.2.2 A slate of names of nominees to serve as elders (pastors), deacons/deaconesses, clerk, and treasurer shall be presented by the elders (pastors) and made known to the church at least one month prior to voting. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders (pastors). Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders (pastors) as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting at which the church votes on the candidates. Affirmation requires a seventy-five percent majority.

9.2.3 The persons elected shall assume their respective offices at the beginning of the fiscal year (unless another date has been specifically designated). Elections to fill any need that may occur during the course of the year may be held at any members' meeting, upon recommendation of the elders (pastors).

9.2.4 An officer may be dismissed from service prior to the expiration of his term if his church membership is terminated for any reason or by removal of a majority of the elders. In the event an officer position is vacated during the term, a special meeting may be called to elect a new officer.

Section 3 - Calling of Paid Elders (Pastors)

9.3.1 In the calling of any man to a paid elder (pastor) position, the same basic process of calling an elder (pastor) must be followed, and the elders (pastors) shall encourage members of the congregations to submit names. In addition, the church shall be given opportunity to assess the gifts and spiritual life of any potential paid elder (pastor).

9.3.2 In selecting a paid elder (pastor) his gifts in preaching and teaching and his commitment to minister personally to the members of this church will be prerequisites. The ability to preach will be assessed with particular care when selecting a potential preaching elder (pastor). Assessment of any candidate shall be made by a committee consisting of at least three elders (pastors) plus four members of the congregation, including at least two women. In addition, the church shall receive assurance from the elders (pastors) that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. The elders (pastors) shall bring only one recommendation to the church at a time.

9.3.3 Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as a paid elder (pastor) shall be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting. The call of a paid elder (pastor) shall take place at a business meeting set aside for that purpose. The extension of a call shall be made upon an affirmative vote of seventy-five percent of the members present.



Article 10 - Indemnification

Section 1 - Mandatory Indemnification

10.1 If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if required by law or if the majority of elders (pastors) determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. Any elder directly involved in litigation should excuse themselves from any vote regarding indemnification. The church shall purchase appropriate insurance to meet these potential liabilities.

Section 2 - Permissive Indemnification

10.2 At the discretion of the elders (pastors), the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

Section 3 - Procedure

10.3 If a quorum of the elders (pastors) is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of elders (pastors) seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

Article 11 - Dispute Resolution

11.1 Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see, e.g., Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8), the church shall urge its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities. The elders (pastors) shall adopt policies and procedures to effect these aspirations.

Article 12 - Amendments

12.1 The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing in the Sunday bulletin and announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

12.2 This Constitution and Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing in the Sunday bulletin and announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.