

# Constitution and Bylaws of Grace Baptist Tabernacle

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## Preamble

We, the members of Grace Baptist Tabernacle located at 2551 Tunnel Blvd., Chattanooga, Tennessee 37406. Hereby adopt the following constitution, which is based upon New Testament Principles. This constitution is not a device of human wisdom and government. It is not a substitute for or an augment to the Word of God. It is simply to be systematic review of the truths found in God's Word concerning His church. Its purpose is to ever keep before the assembly the doctrine, organizations, methods, and the procedures of fellowship and discipline, as clearly taught in the New Testament Christianity in all of its phases. The constitution preserve and secure the principles of

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our faith and provide for orderly conduct of internal affairs, in dealing with others, and of governing members.

## Constitution

### I. Objectives

- A. Evangelistic: We believe the winning of souls was the heart of Christ's Ministry, Luke 19:9-10; so this is to be the most important endeavor of this Local church, John 20:21 and John 10:10.
  
- B. Missionary: We believe in Propagating missions at home, Acts 1:8 and abroad, Matt. 28:18-20.
  
- C. Pre-Millennial: It is our firm convictions that the Lord may come at any moment to receive His own, 1 Cor. 15:51-54. His coming for the saints precedes the tribulation, 1 Thess. 5-9. After which He comes with His saints to reign for a thousand years.
  
- D. Fundamental: We are founded upon the Word of God. We believe the Bible to be God's inspired, infallible and inerrant Word, Palms 12:6-7. As a church, we seek to follow the New Testament Pattern. By "fundamental" we mean that this church is governed by and seeks to conduct its ministry according to the Word of God.
  
- E. Baptist: We believe in the absolute autonomy of the local body, and we believe that the local church should be governed by the authority of God's Word under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, John 16:13.
  
- F. Independent: We mean that this church is to carry on its ministry in an entirely autonomous fashion and is not to be controlled by any group or individual outside the membership of this church.

### II. Purpose

A. The ultimate purpose of Grace Baptist Tabernacle is to glorify God. We believe this can best be accomplished through the literal interpretation of the sixty-six books of the Bible and the organization of the work of the church around the two-fold ministry of:

#### 1. Our Purpose:

- a) To give a clear Presentation of the Gospel to the lost, Gal. 2:21 and to establish the believer in the faith, Col. 2:6-7.

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## 2. Our Hope:

- a) To look forward to the soon return of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we might see Him as He is, 1 John 3:2.

## III. Statement of Faith

The Holy Bible is the inspired word of God and is the basis for our Statement of Faith. The ordinances of the church are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe scriptural baptism is by immersion in water of a believer in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This act symbolizes the believer's faith and obedience, as well as his/her identification with the crucified, buried, and risen Lord. The Lord's Supper is the partaking of the bread and of the cup in symbolic remembrance of the Lord, whose body was given and whose blood was shed for the remission of sins.

## IV. Government

The government of the church is vested in its members. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of its life and organization. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes the needs for mutual counsel and cooperation of the membership.

## V. Church Covenant

Having been led by the grace of God through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit to repent of our sin and in faith turn to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and having given public testimony of this faith through baptism, we now joyfully and solemnly enter into this covenant with the members of Grace Baptist Tabernacle.

We commit, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to affirm and follow the Statement of Faith and covenant in the Church Constitution, to walk together in love, to remember one another in prayer, to help one another in times of need, to exercise gentleness and humility in our dealings with one another as we speak the truth in love, to be faithful in our responsibilities and commitments, to be just and honest in our dealings, and to honor ourselves and other for Christ's sake through sexual purity, personal integrity, and abstaining from things or practices which bring harm to our faith or the faith of another.

We commit to faithful participation in times of worship, prayer, study, and fellowship with other believers, to the building up of the church by using our spiritual gifts in ministry, to contributing cheerfully and regularly for the ministry and expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel to the world.

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We commit to practice personal and family worship, to train our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, and to seek the salvation of our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, and all peoples of the world.

We have read the Articles, Constitution, and Bylaws including those policies dealing with Duties and Rights of Members, Church Discipline and Restoration, and Church covenant and agree to be bound by the Articles, Constitution and Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, and accompanying policies and procedures.

## VI. Amendments

Members may propose changes to the Constitution, It shall be submitted to the Board for consideration and comment. The Board shall present the proposed changes and their comments to the church at a call business meeting. The Constitution may be amended by sixty percent (60%) vote of the voting members present at a call business meeting provided the proposed amendment shall have been presented in writing and announced from the pulpit two (2) Sunday's prior to each meeting.

## Bylaws

### I. Church Membership

#### A. General

The membership of the church shall consist of those persons who profess their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, having been baptized by immersion and having indicated their commitment following the teachings of the Bible as their model and standard of living. Consequently, we regard any and all forms of sexual immorality as sinful. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 15:19; 19:1-9; Mark 10:1-12; 1 Corinthians 7:2-16; Romans 1:18-32).

#### B. Membership Candidacy

Any person may offer themselves as a candidate for membership in this church in one of the following manners:

1. By baptism:
  - a) For persons making a public profession of faith.

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- b) For persons who have experienced salvation but have not experienced believer's baptism by immersion.

## 2. By statement of faith:

- a) For persons who have experienced salvation followed by believer's baptism by immersion by another Baptist church (or church of like doctrine), but are either not now Baptist, or no record is now available.
- b) For restoration upon a statement of repentance and rededication of persons who have been removed from the fellowship of our church for reasons of discipline.

If there is any dissent as to any candidate, such dissent shall be referred to the Deacons for investigation and the recommendation for action to the church within thirty (30) days.

## C. Termination of Membership

Membership in the church shall be terminated by reason of

1. Transfer of letter to another church.
2. Joining another church, a letter of transfer is not required.
3. Death.
4. Written request for termination of membership.
5. Change the status of the membership records.

## D. Duties and Rights of Members

1. Members are expected to:
  - a) Be godly examples in all aspects of private and public life.
  - b) Regularly attend the services of the church.
  - c) Give regularly for its support and its causes in time, money, talents, and spiritual gifts.
2. Members shall have the right and privilege to full participation in the life and work of the church.

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3. Members who have attained the age of fifteen (15) years shall have the right to a voice and vote in all aspects of church transactions authorized or mandated by these Bylaws.
4. Members who have not attained the age of 15 shall have a voice and the right to express their opinion on any matter.

### E. Voting Rights of Membership

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all business matters brought before the church for a vote require 60% of voting members present for approval. Any vote requiring 60% vote will be done by secret ballot. Voting by proxy is prohibited.
2. Amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of the church—60% vote of voting members present.
3. Calling or removal of the Pastor—60% vote of voting members present.
4. Membership termination in instances of church discipline.
5. Members may request that any item presented for vote be done by secret ballot. Unless otherwise indicated, secret ballots shall be counted by the Church Secretary and at least Two Deacons.

### F. Church Discipline and Restoration

It shall be the practice of this church to pursue every reasonable measure for peace and reconciliation. Should one member sin against another member or the Body of Members (the church), engage in unrepentant moral failure or teaching of an essential Biblical heresy, the aggrieved members shall follow in a tender spirit the rules given by our Lord and Savior in Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Galatians 6:1 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14. In the event the matter cannot be resolved between the members, it shall be referred to the Pastor and Deacons for counsel and guidance.

Only after good faith efforts by the Pastor and Deacons to bring about repentance and reconciliation have proven futile, shall the accused member be subjected to discipline by the church with notice of the charges and process. All church discipline will require a unanimous vote of the Pastor and Deacons before presenting it to the church. In the event that termination of church membership is the recommended discipline, the church shall be notified of the charges and actions taken to date at two (2) Sunday's before the vote will be held.

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The Pastor will communicate such restoration to the church in a timely manner.

## II. Ordained Officers of the Church

Church Discipline for ordained Leadership Positions Pastors and Deacons must be done publicly, 1 Timothy 5:17-20.

### A. Pastor

#### 1. Qualifications:

- a) A man consistent with the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7
- b) Ordained as a Baptist Minister
- c) Once a Pastor is elected he must become a member of the Church

#### 2. Responsibilities:

- a) These generally fall into the following areas: preaching, teaching, evangelism, pastoral counseling, Administration, planning, and guiding the church to grow and fulfill its purposes.
- b) He shall lead the church and its organization in performing the tasks in worship, gospel, proclamation, education, and evangelism.
- c) The Pastor shall be an ex officio member of all church standing teams, except the Pastor Search Team.
- d) He shall secure pulpit supply for times of his absence.

#### 3. Call:

- a) A Pastor shall be chosen and called whenever a vacancy occurs.
- b) A Pastor Search Team shall be appointed by the church to seek out a suitable pastor and this team's recommendation will serve as a nomination.
- c) The Pastor Search Team will recommend only one candidate at a time.
- d) The Pastor Search Team will give members at least two weeks' notice of the presentation of the candidate.
- e) Election will be by secret ballot and an affirmative vote of sixty percent (60%) of the qualified voting members.

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## 4. Term of Service:

- a) The Pastor shall serve until either his resignation or the church terminates the relationship, and in either case, at least two weeks (14 days) written notice shall be given unless otherwise mutually agreed or in the event of essential moral failure or essential biblical heresy.
- b) If sufficient cause is found to terminate the Pastor, members shall be given verbal notice at least two weeks prior to a regular or called business meeting for that purpose. The meeting may be called only upon the recommendation of seventy-five percent (75%) of the Board or by a written petition signed by not less than sixty percent (60%) of the voting members.
- c) The vote to declare the position of Pastor vacant shall be by secret ballot. An affirmative vote of sixty percent (60%) of the voting members present is necessary.
- d) Except in instances of gross misconduct by the Pastor so excluded from office, the church will compensate the pastor with one (1) month's salary, payable within 30 days.

## 5. Vacancy:

- a) During a period of vacancy in the Pastor position, the Board will pass to the Chairman of the Deacons.
- b) The Chairman of the Deacons will work with our Board to ensure qualified men are scheduled to preach during the transition time.
- c) The Chairman of the Deacons will follow guidelines in these Bylaws and Church Ministry Guidelines to form the Pastor Search Team.

## B. Deacons

1. Responsibilities: Deacons are first and foremost servants. The word "Deacon" translated in the original language in the Bible means "servant" Deacons are to serve the body of Christ as needed in support of the ministry of the pastor and church in the following:
  - a) Lead the church in the achievement of its mission.
  - b) Proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
  - c) Care for the church's members and others in the community.
2. Number of Deacons: The church shall elect as many qualified men to serve as Deacons as deemed necessary by the Pastor and active Deacon board to fulfill the ministry of the church.

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3. Term of Service: It is the belief of this church that once a man is called to be a Deacon, he is a Deacon for life unless he no longer meets the qualifications.
  - a) Deacons may also choose to move themselves to an inactive status at any time by providing a written notice to be reviewed by the Pastor and chairman of Deacons. A deacon may not remain inactive at the suffrage of the church and could be asked to serve in the event or circumstance the church becomes in need.
  - b) If a Deacon is moved to inactive status for any reason, the procedures for Deacon Election will be followed.
4. Minimum Qualifications: A Deacon must:
  - a) Confess to be a born again Christian with a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and living a life controlled by the Holy Spirit.
  - b) Read and accept the Scriptural basis for Deacons as prescribed in Acts 6:3-8 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. In reference to 1 Timothy 3:12, a Deacon shall be the husband of but one wife, Neither he or his wife have been divorced.
  - c) Support by prayer and participation in the entire church ministry, particularly Sunday school, Sunday worship services, mid-week services, deacon family ministry plan and other services of God's work insofar as able in good faith and conscience.
  - d) Deacons are servants who lead: and leaders who serve. The deacons shall join the pastor in providing spiritual oversight of the Church. Together with the pastor they shall seek to know the will of God for the Church and lead the congregation to do the will of God. The deacons shall meet with the pastor, fellowship and to deal with matters pertaining to responsibilities of the deacon body.
  - e) Shall be a member of Grace Baptist Tabernacle for at least one year prior to the time of nomination for election as a deacon-in-service.
  - f) Shall be a male of at least 25 years of age prior to the time of nomination for election as a deacon-in- service.
  - g) Must be a baptized-believer for at least three years prior to the time of nomination for election as a deacon-in-service.
5. Election:
  - a) The qualifications, duties, and expectations will be made available to the membership when the need for a new active deacon or deacons is established.

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## III. Unordained officers of the Church

### A. Moderator is the President of the Board

#### 1. Responsibilities:

- a) The moderator shall preside at all regular and called business meetings of the church.
- b) In the absence of the moderator, the Chairman of the Deacons shall preside.

#### 2. Term of Service:

- a) The church shall annually elect a moderator to coincide with the beginning of the church year.

### B. Treasurer

#### 1. Responsibilities:

- a) Receive, preserve, and pay out approved expenses, all money, or things of value paid or given to the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements.
- b) Render an itemized report of receipts and disbursements for the year at each annual business meeting.
- c) When the annual report is provided at the end of each fiscal year, any member has the right to review the financial records.

#### 2. Term of Service:

- a) The board shall annually elect a treasurer as its financial officer to coincide with the beginning of the church year.

### C. Trustees

At least three (3) trustees shall be elected by the church to serve as legal officers for the church.

#### 1. Responsibilities:

- a) They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property of the church without specific vote of the church authorizing each action.
- b) When the signatures of trustees are required, they shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, lease, or rental of property, or other legal documents related to church-approved matters.

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## 2. Term of Service:

- c) Trustees shall serve a three (3) year staggered term, rotating off the Board in sequential order, with one new trustee being elected every year to coincide with the beginning of the church year.
- d) If a vacancy occurs during the year, a vote will be conducted during a regular or called business meeting to fill the remaining term of the vacated position.
- e) No trustee may be re-elected to successive terms.

## D. Secretary

### 1. Responsibilities:

- a) Issue letters of dismissal voted by the Board.
- b) Preserve on file all communications and written official reports.
- c) Give required notice of all meeting where notice is necessary, as indicated by the Bylaws.
- d) At least one copy of all church documentation shall be maintained outside the church.
- e) Read letters of condolence at Funerals and keep a copy in the church file.

## IV. Ministry Teams

To facilitate the work of the church, there shall be ministry teams. General guidance for the scope of their work will be outlined in these Bylaws while specific work will be provided in the Church Ministry Guidelines. All ministry teams and ministries shall be accountable to the church, under the direction of the Pastor. In addition, the church may at any time request a special report on any aspect of any team or ministry.

### A. Definition:

- 1. Standing: Elected teams with no limits to consecutive terms served.
- 2. Ad-Hoc: Temporary teams created for a specific purpose

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## B. Establishment:

When new ministry teams are to be established, the following steps should be followed:

1. Need identified and approved by the church.
2. Once the need for the team has been identified, the nominating team will work to identify a chairman of the team.
3. Once a chairman has been identified, the chairman will work with the nominating team to identify additional people to comprise the team (at least 3 members, including the chairman, are required).
4. Once potential team members are identified, the nominating team will formally present the potential team members to the church (during a regular or called business meeting) for vote and approval.)

## C. Number of Members:

Each ministry team will be composed of no less than three members. The size of the ministry team will be determined by the needs of the church as advised by the ministry team Chairperson. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of each standing ministry team serving as a resource person and liaison.

## D. Standing Ministry Teams:

Standing ministry teams shall include teams authorized by the church.

1. Board
2. Ladies Fellowship
3. Men Fellowship
4. Evangelist Team
5. Missionary Team
6. Sunday School

## E. Ad-Hoc Teams:

1. The church has the authority to form ad-hoc teams at any regular or called business meeting.
2. Members of ad-hoc teams shall serve on the team until the assigned task is complete.

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3. Ad-hoc Teams will be selected in accordance with the Church Ministries Guidelines.

## F. Policies and Procedures:

The list of Ministry teams and the policies and procedures that govern them are found in the Church Ministry Guidelines (“Manual”). The manual, maintained by the church secretary, shall be kept in the church and made available to any member upon request. The ministry team Chairperson shall be provided a copy of the guidelines for their team upon their appointment as Chairperson. Addition, revision, or deletion of church policy and ministry guidelines require:

1. Written draft of the proposed change prepared by the ministry team requesting change.
2. This proposal will be finalized and provided to the church Board for review and recommendation for change.
3. If the change is recommended by the Board, the Board shall present the proposed change to the church for approval.
4. If the change is not recommended by the Board, the Board shall provide a written response to the ministry team that made the request.

## G. Ministry Team Charter and Oversight

Each new ministry team will develop a charter to be approved by the Board, which describes the ministry team’s purpose, duties, manning, and qualifications. The nominating team shall have general oversight responsibility to ensure the ministry team is fully staffed.

## H. Operation

1. Each ministry team shall have a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary.
2. Each ministry team shall annually review its policies and procedures to ensure team effectiveness. These policies and procedures will be included as part of the Church Ministry Guidelines. The ministry team chairperson and the Board shall review and approve changes.

## I. Coordination

1. In the spirit of cooperation, each ministry team, through its chairperson, shall consult with all other ministry teams, which may be affected by any contemplated action, prior to action being taken.

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2. Any ministry team recommendations requiring approval of the church shall be reviewed with the Board, as needed, prior to church action. In addition, if such action shall require non-budgeted funds, the treasurer shall review and present the request to the church for approval.

## V. Church Ordinances

### A. Baptism

A person who receives Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith; who professes Him publicly at any worship service; and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord, shall be received for baptism.

1. Baptism shall be by immersion in water
2. The Senior Pastor or other ordained pastor as authorized by the Senior Pastor shall administer Baptism.
3. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service.
4. The Pastor shall counsel a person professing Christ and failing to be baptized after a reasonable length of time.

### B. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby baptized believers, through partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine, commemorate the death of Jesus Christ and anticipate his second coming.

1. The Lord's Supper should be observed as deemed by the pastor.
2. The Pastor shall be responsible for the administration of the Lord's Supper.
3. The Deacons shall be responsible for the physical preparation and serving of the Lord's Supper.
4. All baptized believers, who after a time of Self Examination, not under church discipline and who feel led, may partake of the Lord's Supper.

## VI. Church Meetings

### A. Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning and evening for the worship of God, for preaching, instruction, evangelism, and on Wednesday night designated for prayer and Bible study. These meetings will be open for all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the Pastor or his designee.

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## B. Special Services

Revival services and other functions, which are essential in the promotion of the church's Purpose, shall be scheduled accordingly.

## C. Regular Business Meetings

1. Annual business meetings shall be held before the end of the year.
2. The Pastor or his designee may reschedule a regular business meeting with two (2) weeks advance notice or extenuating circumstances.

## D. Called Business Meeting

1. A called business meeting to consider special matters of significant nature may be called by:
  - a) The Pastor or Board.
  - b) The church with written application by a minimum of sixty percent (60%) of the voting members.
2. Notification Requirement:
3. A minimum two-week written notice must be given for any purpose which requires 60% approval.

## E. Quorum

The quorum consists of 60% of the active membership who attend the business meeting, provided it is a regular meeting or one that has been properly called.

## F. Parliamentary Rules

Robert's Rules of Order (revised edition) is adopted as the standard for parliamentary rules of procedure for all regular and called business meetings of the church. Effort will be made to follow the Robert's Rules of Order standards in parliamentary procedure.

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## VII. Church Finances

### A. Budget

The approved church budget becomes effective at the beginning of the church year.

### B. Fiscal Year

The church fiscal year shall coincide with the church calendar year.

## VIII. Elections, Rotations, and Vacancies

Elections, rotations, and vacancies shall be in accordance with church policy and coincide with the beginning of the church year.

## IX. Dissolution

The dissolution of the church shall occur only upon a unanimous decision of the Board and Members of Grace Baptist Tabernacle. In the event of dissolution, it shall be the responsibility of the Board and Trustees to liquidate all assets, settle all financial obligations of the church and contribute any remaining funds to a ministry or church of like-faith and practice. Under no circumstances shall the Trustees and Members monetarily benefit from the dissolution of the church.