

BYLAWS
OF
GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
of Bowie, Maryland

Article I - Name

This Church is incorporated under the name of Grace Baptist Church of Bowie, Maryland (hereinafter referred to as “Church”).

Article II – Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of this Church is to bring glory to God by making fully devoted followers of Christ who passionately love God and people. This will be accomplished through: 1) Proclaiming the gospel; 2) Meeting together for regular corporate worship 3) Promoting worldwide missionary endeavors; and 4) Offering a teaching and training ministry that equips individuals in spiritual matters and trains them for service.

Article III – Statement of Faith

1. We believe in **THE HOLY SCRIPTURE**: accepting fully the writings of the Old and New Testaments as the very Word of God, verbally inspired in all parts and therefore wholly without error as originally given of God; altogether sufficient in themselves as our only infallible and authoritative rule of faith and practice.
2. We believe in **THE ONE TRIUNE GOD**: Who is personal, spirit, and sovereign; perfect, infinite, and eternal in His being, holiness, love, wisdom and power; Who is absolutely separate and above the world as the Upholder of all things; Who is self-existent and self-revealing in three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each having a distinct ministry in God's relation to His creation and people.
3. We believe in **THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**: Who is the second Person of the Triune God, the eternal Word and only Begotten Son; Who without any change in His divine Person, became man by miracle of the Virgin Birth, thus to continue forever as both true God and true Man, one Person with two natures; Who as Man was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin; Who as the perfect Lamb of God gave Himself in death upon the cross, becoming there the sin of the world, and suffering its full penalty of divine wrath in our stead; Who arose bodily from the grave and was glorified; Who as our great High Priest ascended into Heaven, there to appear before the face of God as our Advocate and Intercessor.
4. We believe in **THE HOLY SPIRIT**: Who is the third Person of the Trinity and the divine agent in nature, revelation and redemption; Who convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment; Who regenerates, indwells, baptizes, seals and anoints all who become children of God through Christ; Who further empowers, guides, teaches, sanctifies and fills believers who daily surrender to Him.
5. We believe **ALL MEN ARE BY NATURE AND CHOICE SINFUL AND LOST**: that man was the direct creation of God, made in His image and likeness; that by personal disobedience to the revealed will of God, man became a sinful creature, the father of a fallen race which is universally sinful in both nature and practice, thus alienated from the life and family of God,

under the righteous judgment and wrath of God, and has within himself no possible means of salvation.

6. We believe in **SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH**: that salvation is the free gift of God, neither merited nor secured in part or in whole by any virtue, or work of man, but received only by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom all true believers have as a present possession the gift of eternal life, a perfect righteousness, sonship in the family of God, deliverance and security from all condemnation, every spiritual resource needed for life and godliness, and the divine guarantee that they shall never perish; that this salvation affects the whole man; that apart from Christ there is no possible salvation.
7. We believe in **RIGHTEOUS LIVING AND GODLY WORKS**: that good works are not a means of salvation in any sense, but its proper evidence and fruit; that as Christians we should therefore obey the Word of our Lord, seek the things which are above, walk as He walked, and accept as our solemn responsibility the duty and privileges of bearing the Gospel to a lost world, remembering that a victorious and fruitful Christian life is possible for those who in gratitude for the infinite and undeserved mercies of God have presented themselves wholly to Christ.
8. We believe in **THE EXISTENCE OF SATAN**: that he originally was created a holy and perfect being, but through pride and wicked ambition rebelled against God, thus becoming utterly depraved in character, the great adversary of God and His people, leader of all other evil angels and spirits, the deceiver and god of this present world; that his powers are vast, but strictly limited by the permissive will of God, Who overrules all his wicked devices for good; that he was defeated and judged at the cross, and therefore his final doom is certain; that we are able to resist and overcome him only in the armor of God, by the blood of the Lamb and through the power of the Holy Spirit.
9. We believe in **THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**: that His return from Heaven will be personal, visible and glorious, a blessed Hope for which we should constantly watch and pray, the time being unrevealed but always imminent; that when He comes He will first by resurrection of the dead and translation of the living remove from the earth the saved, then pour out the righteous judgments of God upon the unbelieving world, afterwards descend with the saved and establish His glorious and literal kingdom over all the nations for a thousand years.
10. We believe in **FUTURE LIFE, BODILY RESURRECTION AND ETERNAL JUDGMENT**: that the spirits of the saved at death go immediately to be with Christ in Heaven, that for the purpose of the determination of rewards, their works shall be brought before the Judgment Seat of Christ at the time when Christ comes for His own; that the spirits of the unsaved at the death descend immediately into Hades where they are kept under punishment until the final day of judgment, at which time their bodies shall be raised from the grave and they shall be judged and cast into Hell, the place of final and everlasting punishment.
11. We believe in **THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE**: that each has definite and distinct spheres of responsibility.
12. We believe in **THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS**: that Christ is our Great High Priest and through Him every born-again person has direct access into God's presence without the need of a human priest; that the believer has the right and responsibility to personally study and interpret the Scripture, guided by the Holy Spirit.

13. We believe in **THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST**: that all who believe in Him as Savior should let Him be the Lord of their lives and that they should assemble and identify themselves in a local church.
14. We believe in **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**: that a New Testament Church is a local assembly of born-again, baptized believers united in organization to teach and practice New Testament doctrines and ordinances, to meet together for worship, prayer, fellowship, teaching and a united testimony, and to actively engage in carrying out the Great Commission.
15. We believe In **THE INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**: that each New Testament Church is free to govern itself without ecclesiastical interference, and should cooperate with other New Testament churches as the Holy Spirit leads; that each church is responsible to follow the pattern of the New Testament and is directly accountable to God.
16. We believe **THE ORDINANCES GIVEN TO THE LOCAL CHURCH ARE TWO, BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**: that Baptism is by immersion of believers, thus portraying the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; that the Lord's Supper is the partaking of the bread and cup by members of the Church as a continuing memorial of the broken body and shed blood of Christ.
17. We believe that **GOD WONDERFULLY AND IMMUTABLY CREATES EACH PERSON AS MALE AND FEMALE**, and that these two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. We believe that God created marriage to be a spiritual covenant between one man and one woman, and that sexual intimacy is a gift that is to be expressed by a man and woman exclusively in the covenant of marriage.

Article IV – Governance

The government of this Church is vested in the body of believers (members) who compose it. This is an independent and congregational led Baptist Church operating under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is subject to the control of no other governing body, but it recognizes and sustains the importance of mutual counsel and cooperation.

Article V - Church Fellowship

The Church shall fellowship with the Churches composing the American Baptist Association **and other like-minded churches and associations.**

Article VI - Officers

Officers: The officers of this Church shall be **Elder**, Deacon, Trustee, and Treasurer.

Elder. The qualifications for **Elder** shall be consistent with those listed in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Their responsibilities generally fall into the following areas: preaching, teaching, counseling, administration, planning, and guiding the Church to grow and fulfill its mission. The office of **Elder** shall lead the church, the organizations, and all the leaders of the Church in performing their tasks in worship, discipleship, and evangelism. **There are two positions for the office of Elder: Pastor and Lay Elder.**

- a. **Election of Pastors.** In the event that a vacancy occurs in a Pastoral position, a search committee comprised of at least five members, including the current Deacon Committee chairperson, the current Personnel Committee chairperson, and a Pastor Representative, will search out and identify suitable candidates for the position. The search committee may convene a much larger group at its discretion, and committee chairpersons may designate representation to others to serve on the search committee when necessary. The search committee will make a final recommendation of a prospective candidate to the pastoral staff. If approved, the subsequent recommendation is then presented to the Church and shall constitute as a nomination. Only one candidate at a time will be brought forward to the Church for a vote. At least two weeks' notice shall be given for a Special Meeting at which time the candidate is voted on by the Church for extending a call. The candidate shall be given an opportunity to accept or reject the call within one week of the vote. If he accepts, he shall assume the office of Pastor. A call for any Pastor of the Church shall be approved by a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of the members present at a regular or special business meeting.

Term of Office. All Pastors shall serve for an indefinite period of time. Vacancies shall be filled as they occur either by death, resignation, moving from city, or Church-desired replacement.

- b. **Election of Lay Elders:** A call for any Lay Elder of the Church shall be approved by a three-fourths (75%) majority vote by the members of the Church present at a regular or special business meeting.

Term of Office. The term of the office of Lay Elder shall be for three years or until such time as God calls them to other service and away from the office of Lay Elder. Upon completion of the Lay Elder's first three year term, at the recommendation by the other Elders and a subsequent vote of approval from the members of the Church, the Lay Elder's term of office will be extended for another three years. Upon completion of a second three year term, the Lay Elder will be required to step down for one full year before they can be considered for the office of Lay Elder again. Vacancies shall be filled as they occur either by death, resignation, moving from city, or Church-desired replacement.

- c. **Ordination.** Any Elder who has been appointed to the office of Elder, but has not been previously ordained (set aside for service) by the Church, can be ordained by the Church.
- d. **Number of Elders.** The number of Elders will be determined by the Church and voted on by the members of the Church.
- e. **Authority and Responsibilities.** Elders shall have the authority and responsibility to oversee the spiritual and administrative activities regarding the preaching, vision, discipleship, and teaching of the Church, be actively involved in the Church's evangelistic and outreach programs, and to look after the general welfare of the Church.

Deacon. Deacons are the servant-ministers of the Church. Deacons are to give their primary attention toward caring for the congregation's general welfare. The Church shall appoint individuals to the office of Deacon who are saved, have been scripturally baptized, and who have a proven demonstrable record of service to the Church, its Elders, and to our Lord. They must be convinced of the primacy of the local Church in carrying out the Biblical responsibilities that God has entrusted them with. They must conduct their personal and professional lives according to Biblical principles, wholly qualified to be entrusted with the duties and responsibilities of the office of Deacon as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Act 6: 1-8, and Philippians 1:1-6.

- a. **Election of Deacons**: A call for any Deacon of the Church shall be approved by a majority vote of the members present at a regular or special business meeting.
- b. **Term of Office**: The term of the office of Deacon shall be for **three years or until such time as God calls them to other service and away from the office of Deacon. At the completion of the Deacon's initial three year term and for every three year term going forward, an evaluation by the Elders with the Deacon will occur. With the recommendation of the Elders, the Deacon's affirmation of God's leading them to continue to serve, and upon notification and approval by the Church, the Deacon's term of office will be extended for another three year term.** Vacancies shall be filled as they occur either by death, resignation, moving from city, or Church-desired replacement.
- c. **Number of Deacons**. The number of Deacons will be determined by the **Elders**.
- d. **Authority and Responsibilities**. Deacons shall have the authority to minister to the Church in all material matters and assist the **Elders** in seeing after its general welfare, thereby making it possible for them to devote as much time as possible to prayer and study of the Word.

Trustee. Any resident member of the congregation who shall be in full fellowship, or good standing, with the Church and who shall be above the age of twenty-one years of age shall be qualified to serve as Trustee.

- a. **Election of Trustees**: The office of Trustee shall be elected by a majority vote of the members present at the time of the business meeting. The voting shall be done by visible vote.
- b. **Term of Office**. The term of office of the five Trustees shall be at the pleasure of the Church. The **Elders** shall designate a President and Clerk from among the five Trustees.
- c. **Number of Trustees**. A total of five Trustees shall be recommended by the **Elders** to serve as Trustee. The Church may, upon its own decision and vote, and taking the proper legal steps under the laws of the State of Maryland, increase the number on the Board of Trustees to not more than twenty-five Trustees.
- d. **Authority and Responsibilities**. The Trustees shall manage the Church property, both real and personal, as fiduciaries. They shall represent the Church in all of its legal matters. The Trustees, as such, shall execute such documents, conveyances and instruments necessary to accomplish that end, and such documents, conveyances, and instruments shall be signed by no less than two of the Trustees as authorized by the Church.

Treasurer. The Treasurer (also known as Business Administrator) of the Church shall be recommended by the **Elders** and shall be voted on by the Church in a regularly scheduled business meeting.

- a. **Election of Treasurer**: The office of Treasurer shall be elected by a majority vote of the members present at a regular or special business meeting. The voting shall be done by visible vote.
- b. **Term of Office**. The Treasurer shall serve for an indefinite period of time. Vacancies shall be filled as they occur either by death, resignation, moving from city, or Church-desired replacement.

- c. **Number of Treasurers.** There is currently one person authorized by the Church for the office of Treasurer. If the need arises, the Church may take the proper legal steps under the laws of the State of Maryland to increase the number of Treasurers if it becomes necessary to do so.
- d. **Authority and Responsibilities.** The Treasurer shall have supervision over all the deeds, bonds, funds, insurance policies, and important papers according to the instructions given by the Church. The Treasurer shall support the **Elders** in providing oversight of the financial and accounting activities of the church, and shall ensure that all funds and securities of the Church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The Treasurer shall keep accurate, clear records of all funds received and paid out and shall report to the Church at each regularly scheduled business meeting.

Article VII - Membership

Membership. This Church will receive members by three means only: 1) Upon profession of faith and as a candidate for baptism; 2) By letter or promise of letter from a church of like faith; 3) By restoration or statement, which applies to those who have been out of reach of the Church and for reason of exclusion or Church disbanding cannot receive a proper letter of endorsement but who can submit proof of scriptural baptism.

All persons requesting membership shall be counseled by one of the **Elders** of the Church to determine their spiritual background and specific nature of their decision concerning the acceptance of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, their willingness to be baptized by immersion, and their agreement to the Church's Covenant of Membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the **Elders** deem appropriate.

Election of Members. All persons requesting membership shall be accepted as members when they are presented to and are approved by a **three fourths (75%) majority** vote of the members of the Church at a regularly scheduled business meeting.

Responsibilities of Membership. **In accordance with the duties enumerated in the Church's Covenant of Membership, each member is expected to participate 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. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend scheduled meetings, to vote on the election of officers including decisions regarding church membership, and on other such matters as may be important to the Church.**

Restoration and Correction of Members.

- a. **Purpose.** **The purpose of church discipline is to bring glory to God by restoring the person (hereafter referred to as "Erring Person") who is in unrepentant sin. Through prayer, counsel, instruction, and correction, those who have erred can be restored to the Church body (Galatians 6:1-2).**
- b. **Process.** **In accordance with the biblical principles outlined in Matthew 18: 15-17, an Erring Person shall be subject to church discipline. Throughout the entire process, the dignity of and respect for the Erring Person will be observed at all times and those administering church discipline will seek God's grace and humility as well. If at the end of the process the Erring Person still refuses to repent and be restored, the Erring Person will be notified that the matter will then be presented to the Church. Once the matter is respectfully and lovingly presented to the Church, a subsequent discussion and a vote to**

release the Erring Person from church membership will occur. However, even at this point, the Church will still pray for the repentance and restoration of the Erring Person.

- c. **Reinstatement.** If an Erring Person heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance and requests reinstatement, he or she shall be publicly restored to membership through the affirmation of the Elders and a vote of reinstatement by a three fourths (75%) majority vote by the members of the Church present at a regular or special business meeting.

Release of Membership. In order to be released from membership, Church members will first be notified that their names are to be brought forth and presented to the Church for a vote at a regular or special business meeting. A minimum of three fourths (75%) majority vote by the members of the Church present at the meeting shall constitute a vote of approval. Release of membership shall occur for any of the following reasons: death of the member, church discipline, written request by the member who has affiliated themselves with another church, or through the recommendation of the Elders to the Church body. The Church shall have the authority to refuse a member's release of membership for the purpose of proceeding with church discipline or for any other biblical reason.

Article VIII – Meetings

Section 1 – Worship Meetings. Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the Church determines.

Section 2 – Members Meetings. The Church shall conduct business and members meetings as often and at such times as the Church desires. All matters will be discussed in open assembly, governed by orderly procedures from Robert's Rules of Order and shall be the guideline for parliamentary procedures for all meetings of the Church. Each member shall have equal voice and vote. Voting shall be by voice vote or show of hands, but the moderator may determine if vote by written ballot is more appropriate. No proxy voting or absentee voting is permissible. A new motion, not on the meeting's agenda, will not be put forward on the floor for a vote without first having **Elders** discussion. Any such motion shall be tabled until the next scheduled meeting. Unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws, a majority vote of the members present at any regular meeting will be the decision of the Church and each member is expected to give full cooperation in carrying out the decision, except in matters of church membership **and the election of Elders which must be by a three fourths (75%) majority vote** and doctrine (Statement of Faith) which must be by **a ninety percent (90%) majority vote** by the members of the Church present at a regular or special business meeting.

Article IX - Church Fiscal Year

The Church fiscal year shall begin September 1st and end August 31st. The annual Church budget shall be on this fiscal year basis. The annual Church budget shall be prepared by the Treasurer in collaboration with the **Elders**. Upon approval by the **Elders** and Deacons, the annual Church budget will be presented to the Church for final review and a vote of approval.

Article X - Ordinances

Baptism. Baptism will be observed as often and at such times as the Church desires. Baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Baptism shall be by immersion.

The Lord's Supper (Communion). Communion, or the Lord's Supper, will be observed as often and at such times as the Church desires. Communion is restricted to members of the Church present at the time of observance.

Article XI - Committees

The Church shall elect as many committees as needed to do the desired work. The committee shall function as long as the Church shall designate in each case. Each committee shall consist of as many members as needed or desired according to the work to be done.

Article XII – Amendments

These Bylaws shall be amended by a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of the members present at any regular business meeting, provided that notice of such proposed business meeting is announced two weeks in advance prior to the meeting, and that a copy of the amendment to the Bylaws is made available to all members at the time the business meeting is announced. All previous amendments are expressly repealed and these Bylaws shall supersede them.