

# **GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH**

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## **CHURCH BY-LAWS**

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## **I. NAME**

The name of this church shall be Grace Community Church.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The New Testament Scriptures clearly teach the establishment of local churches. Grace Community Church, in fulfillment of such teachings, has organized itself to do God's will in evangelizing the lost; edifying believers through Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship, and service; observing the ordinances of believer's baptism and communion; and to be a guardian of "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3).

## **III. AFFILIATION**

Grace Community Church shall be affiliated with the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

## **IV. STATEMENT OF FAITH**

This statement of beliefs provides a doctrinal framework which gives stability and identity to Grace Community Church. We believe each part of the doctrinal statement is necessary to provide that stability and identity. Where we have taken positions on areas of disagreement among segments of evangelical Christianity, we have chosen the position that we believe best reflects the Biblical "weight of evidence." We do not intend to imply that there can be no other belief among people who love the Lord and His Word, nor that we can have no meaningful fellowship and partnership with those who might disagree.

Any doctrinal statement inherently requires that a choice is made between competing viewpoints. To seek a doctrinal statement that would include only those beliefs that all Christendom holds in common would be of no value in defining and contending for "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). This statement of faith is not intended to be used as a guideline for allowing or denying your attendance or involvement. We believe the commitment that a prospective member makes to "abide by the articles of faith and practice of this church" (see section under "Membership," does not necessarily demand agreement in every detail. It does, however, require the willingness to respect the church's position in the matter in question, refrain from practicing or teaching anything contrary in any church function or gathering, and maintain a spirit of openness to the teachings of the Word in that area and all other matters.

We do believe that a church's membership should share a firm commitment to a number of areas that constitute the "core" of the faith. These would certainly include, though not necessarily be limited to, the Godhead (the Trinity), the nature of Jesus Christ, His work in providing substitutionary atonement in His death and resurrection, salvation by faith apart from human effort, and a commitment to the full inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these or other areas with you.

### **Section 1 - The Scriptures**

We believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired word of God, without error in the original writings, and the supreme and final authority in doctrine and practice, for both this church and every individual Christian (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21).

## **Section 2 - The Godhead**

We believe in one God who eternally exists in three persons: The Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person of the Godhead possesses the same nature and attributes, but each is distinct in office and activity (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14).

## **Section 3 - Jesus Christ**

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, that He became man without ceasing to be God having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived a sinless life, that He died as a substitutionary sacrifice for every human being, that He was physically raised from the dead by divine power, that He presently serves in heaven as our Intercessor and Advocate and that He will return to earth (John 1:1, 14: 5:18; II Corinthians 5:21; Acts 2:31-33; I John 2:1-2; John 14:1-2).

## **Section 4 - The Holy Spirit**

We believe that God the Holy Spirit is a person who restrains evil in the world, convict men of sin, regenerates those who trust Christ as Savior, baptizes them into the body of Christ, indwells them permanently, seals them unto the day of redemption, bestows spiritual gifts on each one and fills those yielded to Him. (John 16:7-11; 3:8; I Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8; John 14:16-17; Ephesians 4:30; 5:18; I Corinthians 14:22-24; Hebrews 2:4; I John 5:14-15; James 5:15-16).

## **Section 5 - Angels**

We believe that angels are spiritual beings which were created sinless. Presently angels exist in both fallen and unfallen states, the former state including Satan and his demons. We believe that Satan is a created being who is the enemy of God and all Christians (Hebrews 1:13-14; II Peter 2:4; Isaiah 14:12-14; Genesis 3:1-19; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:10).

## **Section 6 - Man**

We believe that man was created by God as a human being and that he did not evolve from a lower form of life. We believe that he was created innocent and in the image of God. Through their own choice Adam and Eve, the parents of the human race, fell and their sin has resulted in physical and spiritual death to themselves and their descendants. We believe that man is totally depraved, that is, in no way is he able to commend himself to God. He has inherited a sinful nature, is alienated from God and in need of salvation (Genesis 1:1; 27; Colossians 1:16-17; Genesis 2:17; 3:19; Ephesians 2:1-2).

## **Section 7 - Salvation**

We believe that salvation is the gift of God's grace. It cannot be gained by meritorious work but is freely bestowed upon all who put their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary. All who so trust the Savior are forgiven of their sins and born into the family of God by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8, 9; 1:17; John 1:12).

## **Section 8 - Security, Assurance, and Responsibility**

We believe that all the saved — those in whom God has accomplished His transforming work of grace — are kept by His power and are thus secure in Christ forever. It is their privilege to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation. However, this assurance is not the occasion for sin, for God in holiness cannot tolerate persistent sin in His children, and in infinite love, He corrects them. True faith in Christ is expressed by a fruitful, God-pleasing life (John 10:27-29; Romans 8:29-39; I John 5:13; Hebrews 12:6; Matthew 7:20; James 2:20).

## **Section 9 - The Church**

We believe that the universal church, the body of Christ, is a spiritual organism composed of all genuine Christians. A believer becomes a member of this church by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit the moment he trusts Christ as his savior (I Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9, 16; Colossians 1:18).

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We believe that the local church is an assembly of professing Christians who voluntarily join together in one locality to worship God, study the Bible, observe the ordinances, practice Christian fellowship, pray, evangelize the lost and be equipped for Christian service (Acts 2:42-47; I Corinthians 1:1-2; Ephesians 4:11-13).

We believe that Christ instituted the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper which are to be observed until He returns and that these are the only ordinances He so appointed. By water baptism, a believer identifies himself publicly with Christ and His people. Water baptism is intended to be for believers only. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death, the elements being symbolic of His body and blood. Every believer should partake of the Lord's Supper, but only when he is in fellowship with the Lord (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 6:1-14; I Corinthians 11:23-26).

## **Section 10 - The Future**

We believe in the personal, imminent return of Jesus Christ for the church.

We believe that the souls of believers in Jesus Christ pass immediately into His presence at death and remain there in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming for the Church when soul and body will be reunited and joined with Him forever. We believe that after death the souls of unbelievers remain in conscious misery in Hades until the final judgment of the Great White Throne when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord. We believe in a literal heaven and a literal hell (Luke 16:19-26; 23:43; II Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:11-15).

## **V. CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

### **A. Officers**

#### **1. The Head**

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body. He is the Chief Shepherd, and all human government of the church is under His sovereign authority.

#### **2. Elders**

The management and government of the church shall be vested in the Board of Elders, who shall comprise the ruling body of the church and shall have the power and authority to act on its behalf.

##### **a. General Responsibilities**

The Elders are responsible for providing for the pastoral care of the church in the manner described in Acts 20:28-32, I Peter 5:1-4, and Titus 1:5. They shall organize the church to do the will of the Lord and shall seek the mind of the Lord in all matters of the decision before them. They shall oversee the church in such a way as to bring the church individually and corporately to maturity in Jesus Christ.

##### **b. Qualifications**

An elder must evidence the qualifications prescribed for that office in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, shall be a male who evidences a desire to help provide pastoral ministry to the church (I Timothy 3:1), shall be willing to abide by the Doctrinal statement and By-laws of the church, a be a current member, having attended for at least one year before taking office, with exception of the Lead Pastor.

### **c. Types of Elders & Terms of Office**

There shall be two types of elders: governing elders and pastoral Elders. The Lead Pastor and lay Elders shall be governing elders, whose votes are binding. Pastoral elders are all pastors other than the lead pastor, who shall be subject to the Elder confirmation vote process and whose votes are not binding. Pastoral elders and the Lead Pastor will cease to be elders with termination, retirement, or resignation. (continued)

Governing lay elders may serve for a term of three years, at which time he may be re-appointed for another three-year term, after which he will be an inactive Elder for a minimum of one year. A lay Elder may discontinue his leadership role for other reasons: Death, geographical relocation, personal desire, and disqualification, in which case discipline will be administered by the other Elders and the congregation in the manner described in I Timothy 5:19-25. Terms of office shall be staggered as evenly as possible.

### **d. Number**

There shall be a minimum of five Elders, including the Lead Pastor.

### **e. Organization**

Positionally, the Elders will operate equally, including the Pastor. Functionally, they shall organize themselves to include a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and a Secretary, none of whom shall be paid staff. The Chairman, or in his absence, the Vice-Chairman, shall conduct the meetings of the Elders and the congregational business meetings.

The Board of Elders shall conduct meetings that are open to congregational attendance and input, unless matters of sensitivity are being discussed, at which time observers may be dismissed.

### **f. Selection**

Recognizing that the Scriptures teach the appointment of church leaders with the cooperation of the local body (Acts 6:3, 14:23, Titus 1:5), the following selection process shall be followed.

**i.)** Nomination forms for eldership may be submitted to the existing Elders by the candidate himself, by another individual, or by the Elders themselves.

**ii.)** The Elders will interview the candidate, who will fill out a *self-evaluation* form.

**iii.)** Upon the consent of the Elders, the name or names of candidates will be made available to the congregation for their prayerful consideration for a period of not less than two weeks, including Sundays.

**iv.)** *Evaluation* forms will be filled out by the congregation and given to the Elders for their review. Any negative evaluations shall prompt further consideration by the Elders.

**v.)** Upon the Elders' unanimous approval, the new Elder candidate(s) shall be presented to the congregation for a congregational vote via designated meeting, virtual voting, or mail-in ballot. Public notice shall be made at least two weeks in advance. A quorum for this election shall be at least one-half of the members eligible to vote. A two-thirds majority of the votes cast is necessary for election to the office of Elder. Non-votes or a "present" vote shall count towards the quorum, but shall not be counted as a "no" vote.

**vi.)** Following the selection of a new Elder or Elders, they will be presented to the congregation in a service of dedication.

### **3. Staff**

#### **a. Lead Pastor**

##### **i.) Qualifications**

The Lead Pastor shall be an Elder and shall be subject to the same qualifications as an Elder. Additionally, he must evidence the gift of Pastor-Teacher (Ephesians 4:11).

##### **ii.) Duties**

His primary responsibility shall be to provide biblical preaching and teaching, with the majority of his time spent in preparation for the ministry. Additionally, as time and gifts allow, he shall provide guidance, counsel, leadership, and vision to the church in harmony with the other Elders.

##### **iii.) Relationship to Elders**

The Lead Pastor's relationship with the Elders shall function on the following levels: First, he shall be accountable to the Elders, who shall function as his spiritual counselors and advisors. They shall have the final responsibility to ensure he is adequately fulfilling his role as pastor and consistently reflecting the qualifications of an Elder. Second, he is to be "one among equals" in the decision-making process within the Board of Elders. Though he may bring recommendations and proposals to the Board of Elders, final decisions are made by the total body of Elders. Third, he shall serve as a pastor and leader of the Elders, and function as a spiritual shepherd to them.

##### **iv.) Relationship to All Other Staff**

The Lead Pastor shall manage the volunteer and vocational church staff on a day-to-day basis and provide regular reports and recommendations to the Elders on staff functions.

##### **v.) Other Pastors, Church and Administrative Staff**

The Board of Elders may appoint other staff to needed positions as they may choose and may designate other staff members as Elders as they may deem necessary in accordance with the procedures outlined under selection of Elders above.

### **B. Elders' Councils**

The Scriptures assign to the Elders not only the responsibility of teaching the flock and guarding it from error, but also of "ruling" it, and they are to be "overseers" of its life and function. The Elders shall, therefore, administer the church through an appropriate number of Elders' Councils, which are responsible for a defined area of church ministry. Each Council is directly accountable to the Board of Elders through an Elder who is assigned to direct the function of that Council.

#### **1. Membership**

Council members shall be approved for service by the governing Elders. Length of service shall be determined by the individual council.

#### **2. Number**

Each Council shall be composed of a minimum of three individuals plus the Elder directing that Council's function.

#### **3. Leadership**

Each Council, upon beginning an annual term of ministry, shall appoint from its number a Council Chairman, who shall call Council meetings and direct the Council's ministry. The Elder may serve as Council Chairman.

#### **4. Meetings**

Each Council shall meet as often as it deems necessary and shall have the authority to appoint committees or establish ministries to assist it in its function.

#### **5. Elders' Councils Specified**

The following Councils shall be established. Additional Councils may be established as necessary, and the Councils below may be reorganized at the discretion of the board of Elders, although each area of responsibility shall be provided for in any future Council reorganization.

##### **a. Elders' Stewardship Council**

The Elders' Stewardship council shall be responsible for church property, facilities, equipment, and the handling of church finances. The Council shall recommend an annual budget to the Elders, shall be responsible for all the receiving and disbursement of all church funds, and shall provide regular financial statements to the Board of Elders. The Elders shall appoint a church treasurer. The Church Treasurer shall be a member of the Stewardship Council.

##### **c. Elders' Missions Council**

The Missions Council shall be responsible for any involvement by the church in missions, including mission's education, communication with missionaries, and scheduling and providing for visiting missionaries. The council shall also oversee any specific evangelistic or outreach efforts of the church and shall encourage general involvement in missions and outreach by the church body.

### **C. Deacons and Deaconesses**

#### **1. Selection and Term of Office**

The Board of Elders may appoint Deacons and Deaconesses as they deem necessary to assist the Elders in the administration of the church.

While all members of the Body of Christ shall cultivate a servant's heart ("Serve one another in love," Gal. 5:13), a Deacon and Deaconess fulfill a specifically recognized role of servanthood within the local body. Their appointment may reflect (1) special abilities to organize or develop ministries or functions, (2) recognition of the spiritual gift of serving (Rom. 12:6,7), (3) the unusual demands of a specific task for which they were appointed, or a combination of the above.

Their appointment may be for the duration of the task for which they were appointed, or for an indefinite period if the responsibility is a continuing one.

#### **2. Qualifications**

Their moral and spiritual qualifications are found in I Timothy 3: 8-13. They shall be appointed in light of these God-given requirements of faith, character, and ministry.

#### **3. Termination**

A Deacon or Deaconess may be removed from office for the same reasons as those discussed under "The Elders: Terms of Office," or when their specific task has been completed.

## D. Membership

We affirm that all who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior are members of the Body of Christ universal, regardless of any local church affiliation or lack thereof. We also affirm that the local church is the visible expression of the body of Christ, and that it is the privilege and responsibility of each believer to participate in and maintain a commitment to a local church. This participation and commitment constitute a membership far more significant than any membership roll would indicate.  
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Nevertheless, recognizing the need to identify individuals who wish to publicly demonstrate their commitment to this body, who have acquired the right to vote in certain matters governing this body, or who are eligible to serve as its Elders, we will recognize the official membership of those who meet the qualifications and follow the procedure described below.

### 1. Qualifications

**a. Age** - A member shall be 18 years of age or older. Junior membership is available to those under 14 years of age who otherwise meet the qualifications described below. Junior members shall not have voting privileges.

**b. Salvation** - Anyone desiring to become a member shall give testimony to their having come to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

**c. Baptism** - A member of this body shall have been baptized as a believer. Baptism is in no way a means of salvation and therefore is not required for membership in the body of Christ universal. It is, however, evidence of a person's willingness to follow Christ and publicly identify with His Body. We recognize that the other modes of baptism are valid expressions of this desire, but we practice immersion, which we believe best illustrates the spiritual realities of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (that act by which all believers are placed into the body of Christ) and the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

**d. Membership Commitment** - Eligibility for membership includes a willingness to abide by the articles of faith and practice of this church, and agreement to the membership commitments.

### 2. Procedure

**a.** A member of the Board of Elders shall interview any person desiring to unite with this church and give written assent to the articles of faith and practice and the membership covenant of Grace Community Church. Upon interview and approval by an Elder, the names of those accepted for membership shall be announced to the congregation.

**b.** A member of a church in the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches may transfer to another church in the Conference by presenting a letter indicating that he is a member in good standing.

### 3. Duties

The member accepts the privileges of local church affiliation and submits himself to the Board of Elders' leadership and loving discipline. He shall accept the responsibility of exercising his gifts of ministry for the benefit of the body. The Board of Elders accepts the responsibility of the spiritual oversight of those who have become members.

#### **4. Discipline**

God has placed the responsibility upon each believer to judge himself. When a church member fails to do this and falls into deliberate and active sin, whether in doctrine or practice, the local church is given the responsibility to bring such a member under the discipline of the Lord. We believe Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1, among other Scriptures, teach the following procedure:  
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- a.** The person who is aware of the offense is to be the first person to confront, prayerfully, a sinning member.
- b.** If the individual in error refuses to deal with the problem, the matter shall be brought to his or her attention again by one or two additional witnesses who offer reproof and spiritual counsel.
- c.** After reasonable attempts toward restoration have failed, the charges shall be submitted to the board of Elders, who shall give an opportunity to the individual to answer the questions raised.
- d.** If the matter is not reconciled to the satisfaction of the Board of Elders, the offender shall be excluded from the fellowship, participation, and membership of the church at large, by an action of the Board of Elders in an announcement to the membership of the church.
- e.** If the sinning individual at any point demonstrates an attitude of repentance, he or she shall be welcomed and affirmed in love and restored to the fellowship of the church.
- f.** These steps must be taken in an attitude of love and prayer, with gentleness and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, with the restoration of the individual the goal at all points in the disciplinary process.
- g.** The discipline of members shall be a process within the body of the church membership and Board of Elders and shall not be a matter of public discussion within the community by Elders or church members. The discipline of non-members shall be left to the discretion of the Board of Elders.

#### **5. Inactive Members**

Church membership is more than having one's name on a list. A member of Grace Community Church is one who is committed to participating in the life of the body and has agreed in writing to a Membership Commitment as defined on the Membership application form. Members who become inactive for a period of one year or more, as evidenced by lack of attendance and participation through service and giving, and who thereby fail to fulfill the Membership Commitment, shall be deemed by the Elders to no longer be eligible to vote in any matter coming before the church membership and shall in due process be removed from the roll of active members.

## **E. Amendments**

These By-Laws may be altered, amended, or repealed and new By-Laws adopted by unanimous consent of the Board of Elders at any regular meeting of the board of Elders, or at any special meeting called for that purpose, if at least two weeks' written notice is given of such intent, and by the consent of the voting membership of the church at the annual meeting or any meeting called for that purpose. Public notice of such a congregational meeting shall be made at least two weeks in advance. A quorum for such a vote shall be at least one-half of the members eligible to vote. A two-thirds majority of the votes cast is necessary to alter, amend, or repeal these By-Laws, or adopt new By-Laws.

## **F. Congregational Meetings**

The Board of Elders shall call an congregational meeting at such time as the Board of Elders shall deem appropriate. The Elders may call other congregational meetings as needed. Such meetings will be given to discuss various matters relating to the entire church, such as budget matters, new ministries, disciplinary actions, and the appointment of Elders to the Elder Board. Every effort will be made by the board of Elders and Elders' Councils to open and maintain effective lines of communication between the church leadership and the congregation.

## **G. Finances**

### **1. Contracts**

The Board of Elders may authorize any officer or officer's agent or agents of the church in addition to the officers so authorized by this Constitution to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the church, and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances.

### **2. Checks, Drafts, Etc.**

All checks, drafts, or orders for the payment of money, notes or other evidence of indebtedness issued in the name of the church shall be signed by such officer or officers, agent, or agents of the church and in such manner as shall from time to time be determined by resolution of the Board of Elders. In the absence of such determination by the Board of Elders, such instrument shall be signed by the Treasurer or an Assistant Treasurer and countersigned by the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Elders.

### **3. Deposits**

All funds of the church shall be deposited from time to time to the credit of the church in such bank, trust companies, or other depositories as the Board of Elders may select.

### **4. Gifts**

The Board of Elders may accept on behalf of the church any contribution, gift, bequeath or device for the general purposes or any special purpose of the church.

## **VI. CALLING A LEAD PASTOR**

### **A. Procedure**

When the church is seeking a vocational pastor, the board of Elders shall appoint a search committee to prayerfully consider possible candidates and select those best qualified to be interviewed by the Elders and presented to the church.

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After evaluating all available candidates, the Search Committee shall unanimously select the three to five best-qualified candidates and present their names and accompanying evaluations to the Board of Elders. The Elders shall select the candidate best qualified, who shall be interviewed by the Board of Elders and presented to the congregation in a manner which shall provide maximum exposure to the congregation.

Upon satisfactory completion of the above process, the Board of Elders shall call a congregational meeting to vote on the candidate. Public notice of the meeting shall be made at least two weeks in advance. A quorum for this election shall be at least one-half of the members eligible to vote. A two-thirds majority of the votes cast is necessary for the extension of a call to a candidate.

If the candidate receives a satisfactory congregational vote, the Elders shall extend the call-in writing to the candidate. The letter of call shall include all particulars pertaining to the mutual fulfillment of responsibilities.

When a candidate has been selected for interview and presentation to the body, no other name shall be presented for consideration until a decision has been made on the current candidate.

## **B. Termination of Service**

A pastor's term of service may be terminated by either the pastor, the church, or by mutual consent. Any charge made against the vocational pastor, or against any of the Elders, shall be in writing and shall be brought by two witnesses, in the manner described in I Timothy 5:19. Should the congregation lose confidence in the pastor's leadership and ministry, the same procedure shall be followed. The Elders shall discuss the matter with the pastor, and if the matter remains unresolved, the Board of Elders shall have the power to dismiss the pastor. A pastor whose term of service is terminated for any reason shall be entitled to a minimum of one month's pay and benefits following the end of his service to the church.

# **VII. ORDINANCES**

## **A. Baptism**

Since baptism is the outward testimony of an inward spiritual transformation, it shall be administered only to those who give evidence of having been born again by faith in Jesus Christ. The church shall recognize as valid any regular form of believer's water baptism if it is in agreement with the considered conviction of the individual believer. The church shall practice baptism by immersion, a mode recognized as most accurately portraying the spiritual realities of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

## **B. Communion**

Communion, or the Lord's Supper, shall be administered as a commemoration of His death, the elements being used as symbols of His body and blood. It shall be observed on such occasions as the Board of Elders shall deem desirable, and shall be open to all believers, regardless of church affiliation, who examine themselves according to the Scriptures' instructions (I Corinthians 11:28).

## **VIII. MILITARY SERVICE AND NON-RESISTANCE**

We believe that it is the believers' responsibility to love their enemies, pray for their persecutors, and to overcome evil with good. We are instructed to make every effort to live peaceably with all men. We also believe that God has instructed and established human government to provide order and justice in society and the world. Its function is to be carried out by men of integrity, justice, and moral courage.

Therefore, we uphold those who, because of faith and conscience, choose to express the law of love by seeking exemptions from or alternatives to military service. We also support those who choose to serve in agencies of civil government, such as the military or law enforcement, recognizing that the government is God's servant. In doing so, we respect the right of individual conviction in these matters and recognize that various positions will be taken.

In any event, we will give instruction, Scriptural counsel, and encouragement so that our people will make prayerful, honest decisions, and may present a positive testimony for Jesus Christ in whatever area of service is chosen. See Matthew 5:44, Romans 12:18, 21, 13:1-10.

## **IX. MISSIONS**

As a general rule, new missionaries will be considered for support after they have presented their work to the church and have been interviewed by the Elders or their appointee.

Individual missionaries being considered for support shall subscribe in writing to the church's Statement of Faith. Institutions being considered for support shall submit a copy of their statement of faith, which must not contradict that of the church in any significant item.

Individual missionaries supported by the church should be sponsored by or affiliated with an established council that is responsible for and can duly direct their activities. If an individual is being considered for support by the church and is not sponsored by or affiliated with an established mission council, it shall then be the responsibility of the Board of Elders or their appointee to observe the person's work and direct whether this candidate should be included for support. The support of this candidate shall be reviewed annually.

The Elders shall approve missionary support and extend through the term to be served by the missionary candidate, except as limited in the following two paragraphs. Written notification of intended support shall be sent to the mission council at such time as new missionaries have been adopted or the amount of support has been changed.

Support shall not be decreased or terminated during the church year unless a missionary ceases to preach, teach, or live the Gospel of Christ, or unless the church is financially unable to continue such support. In such cases, termination or reduction of support may be determined by the Board of Elders, with the provision that one month's notice is given to the mission council.

Support shall continue while missionaries are on furlough. If for any reason, a missionary is unable or does not intend to continue missionary activities, this support shall automatically be terminated after six months unless the Board of Elders directs a termination at an earlier date. Missionaries supported by this church shall be expected to visit the church for at least one regularly scheduled service during each furlough and write to the church at least once quarterly while on the field. Policies for visitation, and communication shall be established by the missions council and approved by the Board of Elders.

Have questions?

We would love to help answer your questions! Contact us at 316.283.2554 to speak with us or email us at [gracecommunitynewton@gmail.com](mailto:gracecommunitynewton@gmail.com). Office hours are Mon.-Thurs., 8am-12pm and 1pm-5pm.

## APPENDIX - Position Paper on Abortion

### We believe in the sanctity of life.

The issue of abortion has become the most divisive social, political, and judicial issue in America's recent history. However, it is more than a political or social issue. It is also a Biblical, moral, and theological issue. While it is not our intent to address all these concerns, **we intend to proclaim a firm, clear, Biblical stand against the deliberate termination of human life at any point between conception and birth.**

### THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

As noted above, the abortion debate is occurring in many areas. We believe the debate should not center on the question of individual freedom or rights, but on the manner in which God views human life, including the life of the unborn. We believe human life has been given a sanctity, or dignity, that is extrinsic, or conferred upon it by having been created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26,27). Man's existence "in the image of God," while marred by the fall of Adam and Eve, continues to this day, as God's reaffirmation to Noah much later makes clear.

### THE BIBLE AND THE UNBORN

While the Bible speaks only briefly to the specifics of abortion, it does clearly assert the unique qualities of personhood before birth. In both the Old and New Testaments, the same words are used in the Hebrew and Greek languages to refer to young children and the child in the womb. An unborn child has moral qualities (Psalm 51:5), and Psalm 139:13-16 graphically portrays not only the formation of the physical body under God's direction, but also the establishment of God's plan for that person's life before birth. Several human authors of the Bible clearly state their divine calling prior to their birth (Isaiah 49:1, Jeremiah 1:5, Galatians 1:15). These and many other passages of Scripture affirm the humanness of the pre-born, from conception to birth.

### THE CHURCH

We believe that the church is not intended to be primarily a political force. Therefore, it is not our intent to drag our church into the political arena or pursue a militant approach to pro-life issues. However, because this is more than a political issue, we feel compelled to state our position publicly, and pursue the following ministry agenda:

1. At appropriate times and in appropriate contexts, we will provide relevant **Biblical teaching** about abortion and related matters.
2. We will encourage those who identify with Grace Community Church **not to be passive, but active**, as God directs individually, in pro-life involvements. We believe there are a number of options open to committed Christians, and we support appropriate involvement in social and political arenas that may help change society's views regarding abortion.
3. For those who have experienced or participated in abortions, we extend **acceptance and ministry** by the church and caring individuals. We will point such individuals to the redemptive grace of God, which can cover any sin and to provide the ability to live a life that is pleasing to God.
4. We ask for a **gracious response** on the part of all who are a part of this fellowship. The imperative of Scripture is that our speech is "always full of grace, seasoned with salt." Jesus Himself was characterized as "full of grace and truth." We encourage this Christlike response to both the abortion-rights community, *and* to those who believe God has directed them to a more aggressive resistance to abortion practice and thought. We believe Christlike graciousness does not jeopardize, but enhances, a firm commitment to truth.

### OUR RESOLVE

We believe it is a time for firm resolve by those who name the name of Christ in standing against the taking of human life in this manner. The leadership of Grace Community Church encourages all within this congregation to join in the following, particularly as it relates to the issue of abortion. In all other areas of church life as well (adapted from *Sanctity of Life*, Swindoll): **WE RESOLVE** to be alert to the presence of evil and the strategy of the adversary; to become fervent in prayer; to refuse to retaliate in the energy of the flesh; to refuse to surrender to the values of the world, and to seek to glorify the Lord and trust in His Word, regardless.