

Handbook for Elders

of Grace Bible Church

**GRACE
BIBLE
CHURCH**
— *Lorton* —

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Introduction

The church recognizes Jesus Christ as its head and the Scriptures as its only authority for faith and practice (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2 Tim. 3:16). Under that headship and authority, "The leadership of the congregation is vested in elders, who are responsible for the spiritual oversight...of all of the covenant members¹. All Grace Bible Church groups, committees, and ministries are accountable to the elders, who are stewards of these before God and the congregation. Such men comprise an elder team that collectively guides the whole congregation according to the precepts of Scripture. These same men make up the board of directors of Grace Bible Church of Lorton, Virginia Incorporated."²

The *Handbook for Elders* is designed to uphold the authority of Scripture by articulating clear biblical statements on eldership, while relying on biblical wisdom and principles for matters of eldership where there are no explicit biblical directives. It is the aim of this handbook to provide a framework for elder ministry that fosters unity in thought and practice among the elders of Grace Bible Church (GBC).

1. Qualifications

The Bible provides very clear qualifications for men who would hold the office of elder. At a minimum, an elder at GBC must be a man who:

- a. is a covenant member in good standing with GBC,
- b. can affirm, in good conscience, the current GBC Confession of Faith,
- c. aspires to the office (1 Tim. 3:1),
- d. and has proven through active service that he possesses exemplary character and adequate gifting and experience for the office, as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.³
 - i. He is an example for the church in his personal life in being above reproach, with a moral character and reputation (as stated in the above passages) that does not cause him to be liable to accusations of patterns of sin.
 - ii. He is an example for the church in his biblical competency. In other words, he shows an aptitude for understanding and applying sound doctrine. His competence with the biblical text should demonstrate that he is "a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), while employing the biblical text to "...shepherd the flock of God that is among you..." (1 Pet. 5:2). An aptitude for sound doctrine has at least four components to it:
 1. Understanding sound doctrine (2 Tim. 2:15; Titus 1:9).
 2. Believing sound doctrine (Titus 1:9).
 3. Being able to teach sound doctrine (Eph. 4:11-14; 1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 3:16-4:2; Titus 1:9, 2:1-2).
 4. Being able to use sound doctrine to refute false teaching (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Tim. 6:2-3; Titus 1:9).
 - iii. He is an example for the church in his ministry to the congregation.
 1. His ministry shows that he is already engaged in shepherding others well, which testifies that God has called, equipped/gifted, and chosen him to be an elder (i.e., Acts. 20:28⁴; Eph. 4:11).
 2. His ministry shows that he has an aptitude to fulfill the responsibilities of the office of elder, which can be summarized as: feeding the flock (John 21:15; Acts 6:4, 20:28; Eph. 4:11-14; 1 Tim. 3:2, 5:17; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9; 1 Pet. 5:2), overseeing the flock (1 Tim. 3:1, 3:4-5, 5:17; Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2; Heb. 13:17), shepherding the flock (Acts 20:28⁵; 1 Pet. 5:2), and protecting the flock that has been entrusted to him by Jesus (Acts 20:28-30; Titus 3:10).

¹ Covenant Members of GBC have previously signed the *GBC Covenant* and committed to all that it contains.

² *Grace Bible Church Constitution*, Section IV.1 *Elders & Deacons — Appointment & Accountability - Elders*.

³ Being married is not a qualification for the eldership. In the Greek, 1 Tim. 3:2 literally says, "be one-woman man". In other words, what is to characterize a married man, should also characterize a single man, sexual purity.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: Christian Standard Bible*. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: Christian Standard Bible*. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017.

2. Nomination, Candidacy, and Appointment Process

The church does not make a man an elder. Rather, the church affirms the reality of who God has already made him to be by conferring upon him the title of elder (i.e. Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11). To become an elder at GBC, the elder team shall nominate a man, examine him during a period of candidacy, present him before the covenant membership for wisdom, and then formally appoint him to the office of elder. The process outlined below is to help the church guard against appointing unqualified men to the office.

- a. An elder may nominate a man whom he believes meets the qualifications located in Section 1 above and whom he knows has complied with the eldership training requirements⁶ for the office of elder (i.e. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The elders may receive recommendations for elder candidates from church members, but ultimately, nominations are only made by the elders.
- b. If the elder team decides to nominate the man, he shall be notified in writing and asked to be an elder candidate. (The process up to this point is exclusively kept between the elders.)
- c. The elder candidate shall spend a substantial amount of time in prayer, testing his heart, examining his life, and seeking godly counsel on how he should proceed. If he decides to continue in the process, the candidate shall be invited by the elder team to move forward in a process of sufficient examination. The candidate shall also, along with all who may be included, be made aware that the candidate's identity shall be kept confidential, so that if he should either withdraw or be deemed not qualified, his reputation shall be protected. With that understanding, when the circle of people in the "know" is to be broadened beyond the elder team (so that the elders can sufficiently examine the candidate), the candidate shall be made aware of the person(s) who are being brought into the examination process.
- d. Examination of an elder candidate:
 - i. An elder candidate shall be formally and sufficiently examined at a meeting of the whole elder team for the qualifications stated in Section 1, and to seek evidence of the Lord's calling to the office, and to confirm that he is able to serve as an elder. More than one meeting may be needed.
 - ii. The elder team shall also meet at least once with the candidate's wife, if married, in order to gain insight and understanding regarding the candidate.
 - iii. The elder team shall also engage sufficiently with any relevant ministry leaders to gain insight and understanding regarding the candidate.
 - iv. An elder candidate, his wife, and other personal references (including but not limited to: coworker, boss, neighbor, and family) shall complete the appropriate elder candidate questionnaires.
 - v. The elder team shall observe the candidate engaging in each ministry that he leads and serves in (e.g. home group, men's ministry, missions committee, etc.) throughout the examination process.
- e. Upon satisfactory completion of the examination, having nothing identified from the elders as disqualifying, and provided the candidate still has a sense of calling, the elder team shall decide whether to present the elder candidate before the covenant members to receive their wisdom.
 - i. If the elder team decides to move forward in the process, the candidate shall be notified of the elder team's desire to present him before the church.
 - ii. If the elder team decides to not move forward in the process with the man, the man shall be notified in writing with specific biblical reasons for the process being stopped. He shall also be afforded the opportunity to engage with the elders, as needed, so that he can discuss with the elders their decision and experience God's grace through their observations.

⁶ By "eldership training requirements" we mean that a man has been trained in the areas of doctrine, character, and ministry.

- f. When an elder candidate is presented to the church, his name, photo, and biography shall be posted in the bulletin several times throughout the thirty (30) day period and via email to all covenant members, who shall also be informed that:
 - i. he has completed a rigorous process of evaluation by the elder team,
 - ii. nothing was identified as disqualifying, according to the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4, and
 - iii. he has proven, through active service, to possess exemplary character and adequate gifting and experience to be an elder.
- g. The covenant members shall also be informed several times throughout the thirty (30) days of their vital role in the ongoing candidacy process, through their responsibility to offer wisdom about the elder candidate.
 - i. Covenant members shall be asked to direct their wisdom about the elder candidate to any or all members of the elder team, either in person, in writing, or by electronic communication. Anonymous information cannot be considered.
 - ii. The elder team will welcome and consider all wisdom and observations about the candidate's ministry skills, personality, and/or biblical qualifications, and may ask the covenant member to also speak with the elder candidate personally.
 - iii. If a covenant member has an accusation of sin against the elder candidate, for the love of brother, the member should follow Matthew 18:15 and speak first with the candidate. If any concern remains, the member should follow Matthew 18:16 and "take one or two witnesses with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." If any concern still remains, then the member should speak directly with any or all of the elder team for the pursuit of reconciliation. If any concern still remains, the elder team shall then decide whether to enter into the formal restoration process, as outlined in Appendix C.
- h. After thirty (30) days of seeking wisdom from the covenant membership, the elder team shall reach a final decision and shall inform the elder candidate of that decision in writing. The elder team shall then "formally bring the outcome before the church with an appropriate public statement to the church that reflects the elders' consideration of wisdom from the covenant members."⁷ Subsequent to that announcement, the elder candidate shall be formally appointed to the office of elder and shall sign the *Handbook for Elder's Statement of Affirmation and Commitment* located in Section 15 below.

3. Responsibilities

All elders are expected to lead, oversee, and shepherd the flock. As evidenced in Acts 20:17-28, the terms *elder* (20:17), *overseer* (20:28), and *shepherd* (20:28⁸), which is also translated as *pastor* in Ephesians 4:11, are all complimentary titles and actions, speaking about the same office. The fact that some GBC elders may receive financial compensation to work full-time at the ministry, and others may not, is in obedience to the biblical command found in 1 Timothy 5:17-18. However, there is no distinction between those who are paid and those who are not in terms of authority, responsibility, or accountability to carry out the work of a pastor, elder, and overseer.

The responsibilities of the office of elder can be summarized as: feed (John 21:15; Acts 6:4, 20:28; Eph. 4:11-14; 1 Tim. 3:2, 5:17; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9; 1 Pet. 5:2), oversee (1 Tim. 3:1, 3:4-5, 5:17; Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2; Heb. 13:17), shepherd (Acts 20:28⁹; 1 Pet. 5:2), and protect the flock (Acts 20:28-30; Titus 3:10) that has been entrusted to him and his fellow elders by Jesus. Since Scripture charges elders with these responsibilities, the elder team shall serve as the church's final authority on biblical interpretation and application as it pertains to church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline (e.g., Eph. 4:11-13; 2 Tim. 4:1-2).

- a. In accordance with the above, and in the specific context of GBC, the elder team shall take particular responsibility to:
 - i. modify, when necessary, the GBC Confession of Faith,

⁷ *Grace Bible Church Constitution, Section III Wisdom from Covenant Members*. The "public statement made by the elder team to the church" shall consist of an installation service during the Sunday morning services.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: Christian Standard Bible*. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017.

⁹ *Ibid*.

- ii. encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, and protect the church from error and false doctrine,
 - iii. seek to ensure that all who minister God's Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share the fundamental convictions of GBC,
 - iv. conduct worship services and administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper,
 - v. perform child dedications, funerals, and weddings,
 - vi. schedule and lead regular congregational meetings,
 - vii. work diligently to maintain a posture of transparency and approachability through clear and regular communication, and by welcoming dialogue with the covenant membership,
 - viii. examine and affirm prospective covenant members and oversee the process of church discipline and restoration as outlined in Appendix C,
 - ix. mobilize the church for missions,
 - x. equip the covenant membership "for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12),
 - xi. help every covenant member become a disciple-making disciple and mature in Christ,
 - xii. oversee and lead counseling,
 - xiii. oversee the ministries of the church, and to establish, modify, and dissolve structures according to the best interests of the church,
 - xiv. continuously seek to identify and equip potential elders, deacons, and ministry leaders,
 - xv. examine, install, and, when necessary, remove officers and employees of GBC,
 - xvi. oversee the work of the Deacons,
 - xvii. establish ministry positions or committees as necessary to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities (e.g., worship leader, missions committee, etc.),
 - xviii. propose the establishment and funding for paid non-pastoral staff positions,
 - xix. establish policies and practices for the church consistent with the mission, purposes, and confession of faith of GBC. The elder team may consult with or delegate to the deacon team the remaining responsibilities under 3.a.xix - xxi below,
 - xx. determine who may or may not use the church facilities and adopt policies for this purpose,
 - xxi. establish an annual budget and disburse funds of GBC as are required to fulfill the mission and doctrinal statement of GBC, as they may deem appropriate,
 - xxii. and borrow money and incur indebtedness for the purposes of GBC and to cause to be executed and delivered promissory notes, bonds, debentures, deeds of trust, mortgages, pledges, or other evidences of debt and securities.
- b. In accordance with the above, and in the specific context of GBC, each elder shall take particular responsibility to:
- i. uphold, in good conscience, the GBC Confession of Faith, encouraging sound doctrine and practice, admonishing and correcting error,
 - ii. regularly attend and participate in elder team meetings,
 - iii. pursue personal sanctification in the strength that God supplies (e.g., 1 Tim. 5:22; Phil. 2:12-13; 1 Pet. 1:14-16),
 - iv. giving themselves to diligent study of Scripture and fervent prayer,
 - v. be regularly engaged in teaching the Word of God through ministry at GBC,
 - vi. set an example for the flock (through regular engagement) in discipleship, including evangelism of unbelievers and equipping of believers, in all of its various expressions,
 - vii. set an example of involvement in the church's various ministries that men can participate in,
 - viii. take note of consistent patterns of opposition or behaviors of disagreement amongst their fellow elders and, with grace and God's Word, admonish and exhort the elder(s) in love,
 - ix. lead or co-lead a home group, and
 - x. represent Christ and His church and be a loving neighbor by showing wisdom as it pertains to political issues and socially divisive issues.

4. Plurality and Composition of the Elder Team

GBC is to be led by a plurality of elders, and not by a single elder; though how many elders constitute an adequate plurality is not given in the New Testament. (Acts 14:23, 15:2-16:4; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 4:14) As a matter of wisdom and preference, the elder team shall be, when possible, composed of at least one (1) more non-staff elder than the number of staff elders.

5. Non-Staff Elders

Non-staff elders shall be those men who serve as an elder with the same authority, responsibility, and accountability as the staff elders, but without receiving financial compensation. Non-staff elders are expected to use electronic communication, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and regular elder meetings to keep the full elder team apprised of all matters relevant to the shepherding and oversight of GBC.

- a. Term: An elder shall commit to serve in the office of elder for a term of no less than three (3) consecutive years. At the end of each term, an elder shall undergo a review given by the elder team. An elder may serve two (2) consecutive terms. The cycle of two potential three (3)-year terms, with a sabbatical in year seven (7), shall continue until the elder either resigns or is removed.
- b. Sabbatical:
 - i. After an elder has served six (6) consecutive years, he must take a one (1)-year sabbatical for rest and renewal. During the sabbatical period, the elder shall remain an elder, but be considered a non-active elder with no voting privileges and shall not ordinarily be expected to participate in meetings or influence the decisions of the elder team. The elder team may have specific instances of seeking wisdom from an elder on sabbatical, however, this should not be the norm. The elder shall, however, be encouraged to continue in ministry to the flock and exercising the normal rights and responsibilities as a covenant member of GBC. Following the completion of the sabbatical, if the elder on sabbatical desires to continue serving as an elder, he shall begin a new three (3)-year term as an active elder with all of its authority, rights, and responsibilities.
 - ii. If an elder or the elder team determines that he needs an extended sabbatical of six (6) months or less, at any time, because of a legitimate need (e.g., illness, tragedy, expanded work commitments, major life changes, etc.), then such elder may transition to active, but non-voting status, for a period of time determined by the elder team.
 - iii. If an elder or the elder team determines that he needs a sabbatical of six (6) months to one (1) year, at any time, because of a legitimate need (e.g., illness, tragedy, expanded work commitments, major life changes, etc.), then such elder may do so following the same procedure laid out in Section 5.b.i. above. The one (1) caveat being that such elder must have the approval from the elder team before he can officially take his one (1)-year sabbatical.
- c. Elder Review: Non-staff elders shall undergo an elder review, given by the elder team, at least annually.
- d. Resignation: An elder who chooses to resign from the elder team shall notify, in writing¹⁰, the remaining members of the elder team, when possible, at least sixty (60) days before the effective date of resignation. Those remaining elders shall determine the most edifying and helpful way to transition the elder out of office and to notify the congregation.
- e. Removal: A non-staff elder may be removed by the elder team for the reasons stated in Section 7.c and 7.d, following the procedure laid out in Section 7.

¹⁰ An explanation for his resignation shall be included.

6. Staff Elders

Staff elders shall be appointed by the elder team, which is responsible to search for and screen candidates, using the applicable processes located in Section 2. As a matter of wisdom, the elder team shall select a lead pastor, and may select additional staff elders who shall be known as associate pastors. Paid staff elders are expected to use electronic communication, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and regular elder meetings to keep the full elder team apprised of all matters relevant to the shepherding and oversight of GBC.

- a. Lead Pastor: Authority/Role/Responsibilities: The preaching and teaching of the Scriptures in public meetings of the church shall be vested in the lead pastor. He shall bear the weight of the responsibilities of an elder described in Section 3 and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching, teaching, and equipping. He shall preach at the Sunday morning services, oversee the administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and perform such other duties, any of which may be delegated to the other elders. Unless otherwise stated, the lead pastor shall also have oversight over the paid pastoral staff and other paid positions at GBC. The lead pastor shall serve as the lead spokesman for the elder team (e.g., congregational meetings, etc.). He shall also, as directed by the elder team, when possible, and when appropriate, inform the deacon team of church matters to elicit their prayers and provide them with situational awareness.
- b. Associate Pastor: Authority/Role/Responsibilities: An associate pastor shall be an elder. He shall bear the weight of the responsibilities of an elder described in Section 3 and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching, teaching and equipping. An associate pastor shall assist the lead pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties which may be specifically assigned to him by the lead pastor and/or the elder team.
- c. Term: There is no term or term limit for a staff elder
- d. Elder Review: Staff elders shall undergo an elder review, given by the elder team, at least annually.
- e. Absence, Leave, and Sabbatical: Staff elders shall adhere to the *GBC (Pastoral) Staff Absence and Leave Policy* (see Appendix D) for guidance on all matters pertaining to absence and leave (e.g. vacation, sabbatical, or conferences).
- f. Resignation: Staff elders may resign from their pastoral duties by notifying, in writing¹¹, the remaining members of the elder team, when possible, at least ninety (90) days before the effective date of resignation. Those remaining members shall determine the most edifying and helpful way to transition the staff elder out of office and employment, and to notify the congregation.
- g. Removal: A staff elder may be removed by the elder team for the reasons stated in Section 7.c and 7.d, following the procedure laid out in Section 7.

7. Removal

The elder team shall have the sole authority to remove an elder for any valid cause as stipulated in 7.c and 7.d.

- a. Removal of an elder requires at least a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the other elders.
- b. The process of removing an elder shall be held in strict confidence, exclusively amongst the elder team and the elder in question, until such time as it is appropriate to inform the congregation. If at any time the circle of people "in the know" is to be broadened beyond the elder team (so that the elder in question can be sufficiently examined), the elder shall be made aware of the person(s) who are being brought into the process.
- c. An elder may be removed if he is no longer able to fulfill the responsibilities of eldership as stated in Section 3 or is unable or unwilling to resign. In any case, the elder team shall remove the elder and inform the covenant members.
- d. Additionally, an elder may be removed for no longer being qualified according to Section 1, by disqualifying sin, by persistent and unrepentant patterns of sin (1 Tim. 5:20), or by being divisive (Titus 3:10). Such removal shall only be pursued after biblical restoration

¹¹ An explanation for his resignation shall be included.

has been aggressively pursued and failed (i.e. Matt 5:23-24, 7:1-5, 18:15-16; Luke 17:3; 1 Cor. 1:2-9; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:15; Col. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:14; James 1:19). If a charge of sin is made against an elder, it must be consistent with the biblical process described in 1 Timothy 5:19-20. The elder shall have the opportunity to answer the charge(s) in the presence of his accusers but shall not be present during the ensuing discussion and decision process. The remaining elders shall work diligently to make this process as expedient as possible.

- i. If the remaining elders decide that the charge(s) against the elder has not been sustained, the elder team shall consider: (1) Whether it is necessary to rebuke those who brought the unproven charge(s), and (2) whether it is necessary to make an announcement about the unproven charge(s) at a congregational meeting.
- ii. If the remaining elders decide by at least a two-thirds (2/3) vote that the biblical charge(s) has been sustained, the elder team shall remove the elder and inform the covenant members in such a biblically clear and compelling way "that the rest may stand in fear." (1 Tim. 5:20)

8. Accountability

Elders are accountable first and most importantly to the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 4:1-2a; Heb. 13:17). Elders are also accountable to the plurality of elders they mutually submit to (Heb. 13:17). Finally, as covenant members of the church, the elders are accountable to the other covenant members of the church (1 Tim. 5:19-21).

9. Conflict of Interest

An elder shall recuse himself from the consideration or execution of any relevant business in which he has, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest. The elder team may also decide by at least a two-thirds (2/3) vote to excuse an elder from consideration or execution of any relevant business in which he has, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest.

10. Officers

The officers of the elder team shall consist of a chairman, a vice-chairman, a treasurer, and a secretary. No elder may serve as an officer while on sabbatical.

- a. Selection: The officers shall be selected by a decision of the elder team each year in August. Officers may be re-appointed.
- b. Term: Each officer shall hold his office for one (1) year or unless he resigns before completing his term, is removed, or becomes otherwise unqualified to serve, or until his qualified successor is elected.
- c. Vacancies: A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or any other cause shall be filled in the manner prescribed in this Section.
- d. Chairman: The chairman shall, in consultation with the vice-chairman and with staff, develop the agenda for all elder meetings and act as the moderator at each elder meeting (which are to be conducted according to scriptural principles such as those set forth in Philippians 2:2-8).
- e. Vice-Chairman: The vice-chairman shall assume the duties of chairman if the chairman is unable to fulfill them. The vice-chairman shall work in consultation with the chairman to develop the agenda of all elder meetings. If the chairman is a staff elder, the vice-chairman shall be a non-staff elder. If the chairman is a non-staff elder, the vice-chairman shall be a staff elder. If necessary, the vice-chairman may also serve as either treasurer or secretary.
- f. Treasurer and Secretary: When possible, these positions shall be held by two different elders, but may be shared by one man who holds no more than two offices.
 - i. The treasurer shall be responsible for administrative duties delegated by the fellow elders, including check signing. The treasurer shall have no independent decision-making authority. The treasurer will be assisted by an assistant treasurer, who is a deacon. This office shall not be held by a full-time staff elder. In the case where this is not possible, the office of treasurer shall be temporarily delegated to a deacon, by the elders, until such time an elder (other than a full-time staff elder) is appointed.

- ii. The secretary, or his designate, shall attend elder team and congregational meetings and record all votes and minutes of the proceedings in the minutes book kept at GBC. The secretary shall also maintain at GBC a membership register that includes the names and addresses of each covenant member.

11. Meetings

All meetings are to be conducted according to scriptural principles such as set forth in Philippians 2:2-8.

- a. Regular:
 - i. Meetings of the elder team shall be held regularly, as determined by the elders at a time and place for which at least two (2) weeks' notice has been given.
 - ii. The elder team may open a portion of any regular meeting to the congregation. Meetings where a portion shall be "open" to the congregation must be: 1) advertised (e.g. bulletin, or website event, or weekly church email, etc.) at least two weeks before the meeting date and 2) scheduled in such a way (both day and time) as to not create a perceived exclusion of the normal congregation.
 - iii. Agenda for regular meetings (two-person accountability):
 - 1. The Chairman shall, in consultation with the Vice-Chairman and with staff elders, develop the agenda for all elder meetings and act as the moderator at each elder meeting.
 - 2. Discussion on any matter shall be limited to standing elders. However, any covenant member may request a place on the agenda by contacting an elder. The elder shall then in turn pass the request onto the chairman.
- b. Special:
 - i. Special meetings of the elder team may be called at any time by more than one-half the members of the elder team.
 - ii. All reasonable means shall be used to notify each elder of a special meeting. Each elder has a responsibility to be available to the entire team.
- c. Meeting Methods:
 - i. The preferred method for all elder team meetings shall be in person.
 - ii. Any meeting may be held by conference telephone or similar communication equipment, as long as all elders participating in the meeting can hear one another. All elders participating by conference telephone or similar communication equipment, shall be deemed present at such meeting.
- d. Meeting Participation:

Each elder has a responsibility to make every effort to participate. If an elder cannot make a meeting in person, he may participate in the meeting by conference telephone or similar communication equipment, so long as all other elders can hear him. In so doing, the elder shall be deemed present at such meeting.
- e. Minutes:
 - i. A written record of all proceedings and decisions at each meeting of the elders shall be maintained. The written record shall, at a minimum, include the location, date, and time of the meeting, a list of those present and absent and a record of any decisions reached, and the meeting adjournment.
 - ii. Minutes of any meeting may be made available to covenant members at the elder team's discretion.

12. Decisions

- a. Guiding Biblical Principles:
 - i. Honoring the Lord Jesus Christ and serving His church are the ultimate goals.
 - ii. Unity, born out of humility (Phil. 2:2-8) and mutual submission, is the highest goal.
 - iii. God's Word shall be our objective rule and guide. Our personal perspectives, practices, and preferences shall be held loosely, as subjective, and not higher than objective biblical principles. In other words, we shall not fall into the error of putting our "practice over principle" and thus falling into the error of the Pharisees.

b. Guiding Procedures Born Out of The Biblical Principles Stated Above:

All decisions made by the elder team shall be subject to the following procedures. A majority vote refers to a simple majority or a higher threshold if it is required by another section of this handbook.

- i. One hundred percent (100%) vote of the elder team approves a motion. A majority vote sends a motion to another vote for affirmation.
- ii. One hundred percent (100%) vote for affirmation approves a motion. Elders are expected to affirm a motion unless they have a material objection, such as a matter of doctrine or conscience.
- iii. A motion that is not 100% affirmed may either be withdrawn, or the minority given the option to prepare and present their position after a period of at least fourteen (14) days, or an agreed upon time for prayer and preparation. If the majority margin is slim or the motion volatile, the majority should strongly consider receding for the sake of unity.
- iv. If the minority chooses not to present their position and a majority does not recede, the motion carries, and the minority is expected to submit and affirm the motion.
- v. If, after the fourteen (14) day minimum period, the minority presents their position, and a majority still approves the motion and does not recede, the motion carries. The minority is expected to submit and affirm the motion.
- vi. If a member of the minority is ultimately unable to, in humility, submit to the majority position of the elders, he (or they) shall resign following the procedure laid out in 5.d. If the elder(s) in the minority is/are also unwilling to resign, he/they may also be removed following the procedure laid out in Section 7.
- vii. In the case that there is an evenly split decision:
 - i. Review this handbook and consider the responsibilities of an elder (Section 3). In particular review this section (12). Give special attention to Scripture references in this document and elsewhere. God's Word should be brought to bear often.
 - ii. Time in prayer and fasting shall be suggested and pursued.
 - iii. Situations where there is some perceived conflict of interest should be discussed and recusal considered.
 - iv. Ultimately, split decisions should entail further consideration and time given to the matter.
 - v. Once again, God's Word should be brought to bear often and time in prayer and fasting should be suggested and pursued.
- viii. An elder who is unable to attend a meeting, or who has a conflict of interest, may waive his right to vote on any or all matters after seeing the agenda for an elder team meeting.
- ix. In lieu of a decision being made in person at a meeting, the elder team can vote on some minor issues by electronic communication.

13. Confession of Faith – Alterations, Amendments, Repeals, or Restatements

The GBC Confession of Faith may only be altered, amended, repealed, or restated by at least a two-thirds (2/3) vote from the whole elder team. In accordance with the GBC Constitution, the proposed decision of the elder team must be presented to the covenant membership, to gain their wisdom on the matter, before making a final decision.

14. Handbook for Elders – Alterations, Amendments, Repeals, or Restatements

This handbook may only be altered, amended, repealed, or restated by at least a two-thirds (2/3) vote from the whole elder team.

15. Statement of Affirmation and Commitment

I _____, on _____, affirm the *Handbook for Elders of Grace Bible Church*, in its entirety. In the strength that the Lord supplies, and in good faith, I also commit to adhere to any future changes to this Handbook that are approved by the elder team, throughout the time that I serve as an elder at Grace Bible Church of Lorton, Virginia.

Sign _____

Appendix A

Confession of Faith

The Scriptures and Revelation

All that now needs to be known of God, Man, and Salvation has been revealed in God's Word, the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Bible. These documents have come to us preserved by the Spirit as fully faithful representations of the original manuscripts, which were God-breathed, and although penned by human authors, are without error in all areas they address.

These Scriptures are self-authenticating, and not dependent upon men or tradition for their authority. Rather, they are authored by God, who is Himself Truth, and are to be received because they are His Word. They are known as Truth by those who know God, by the testimony of the Spirit of Truth, who indwells all believers, and who leads them into all Truth.

2 Peter 1:3, 4, 19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 5:18; Psalm 138:2; John 16:12-15; Romans 3:4; Deuteronomy 29:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 5:9; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16.

God

God is a Spirit, who, existing from all eternity, is one God. He is unchangeable, everywhere-present at all times, is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-wise. He is just, holy, and is love itself. He is the creator, sustainer, and sovereign of all things, and is due the worship of all persons.

John 4:24; Deuteronomy 5:6-10; 6:1; Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 139:7-10; Malachi 3:6; Job 34:12; 37:23; 40:8; 41:34; 42:2; 1 John 4:8; Genesis 1:1ff; Romans 11:33; Jeremiah 23:23.

God is one Being in essence, but exists in three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are equal in their essential Godhood, but, in perfect love and harmony, fulfill different roles in their relationships with each other, man, and the creation.

Luke 3:21, 22; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Acts 13:2; Colossians 1:15-20; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-14; 20:28.

God loves man in such a way that He commissioned the Son to give Himself as a substitute for sinners, bearing God's wrath against sin. The Son did so willingly, by taking upon Himself full and true humanity (including a human body, but free of sin) through birth to a virgin, suffering an unjust death, and rising again bodily on the third day. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for His people. The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration (through the Word of God) and makes the work of the Son real in the believer's experience. He is the Person in the Godhead who convicts of sin, leads believers in the daily practice of godliness, and also intercedes for them.

John 3:3-8, 16; 16:7, 8; Romans 3:21-25; 8:4-17, 26; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; Hebrews 1:1-3; 7:23-25; 1 Timothy 4:10; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35; James 1:18.

Man

All men and women are one with the first man, Adam, who was created in innocence, but who sinned as mankind's head. Each human is a sinner from birth, by nature and by choice. Therefore, apart from the sovereign grace of God, each person stands under His wrath. Man is still in the image of God, but that likeness has been tainted, damaged, and ruined by sin and disobedience, which bring weakness, sickness, pain, suffering, and death. Unconverted man is spiritually dead in his sin, with no hope for a right relationship with God, and is unwilling to receive either His natural revelation in creation, or His mercy as revealed through the Gospel.

Genesis 3:1-7; 6:5; Romans 3:9-21; 5:12, 16-19; John 3:18-20, 36; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:14; John 6:44.

Salvation

Man's only way to be reconciled to God is by becoming one with the new Head, Christ. Union with Christ occurs when one believes the Gospel by repenting from his sins and in faith trusting God's promise that the perfect life, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is sufficient payment for sin and therefore God forgives all of the past, present, and future sins of the believer. At the moment of faith in Christ, the Christian partakes of God's very nature, being born of His Spirit. He has Christ's righteousness placed to his account, Christ's Spirit given to him as a pledge of full and final redemption, is made a new creation, and is baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, the Church. He is given eternal spiritual life with assurance of physical resurrection in a glorified body. God is sovereign in salvation: All whom God has chosen to salvation are drawn by the Father to the Son and will be kept by the power of God until death or Christ's return.

Romans 5:15-21; 8:9, 14, 23, 35-39; John 3:6; 6:37, 44; Acts 13:48; 15:1-10; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:3-7, 13, 14; 2:8-10; Colossians 1:22, 23; Titus 3:5,6; Hebrews 3:6, 14; 6:9-12; Philippians 1:6; Revelation 5:9.

Faith and Good Works

Nothing in man naturally will bring him to do any "good work" that delights God and accomplishes salvation. Saving faith, however, once alive in the heart of the believer, produces works appropriate to that faith. Believers are said to be justified by faith alone. However, the faith that justifies the sinner is never alone, accompanied as it is by works of love. This love, far from being opposed to God's moral law, fulfills it. The very grace of God that teaches us the Gospel message also teaches and guides us into godly living. And the very Spirit of liberty that sets believers free from the curse of the Law, indwells believers to the end that the righteous requirement of the Law may be fulfilled in them.

Galatians 5:4-6, 19-24; Romans 8:1-4; 12:1, 2; 13:8-10; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 12:14; James 2:14-25; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Titus 2:11-14; 3:8; 1 John 2:3-6; 4:19-21; 5:2, 3.

The Church

All of the redeemed since Pentecost constitute the Church, the Body of Christ, which is the present expression of God's Kingdom program, and is to be distinguished from the nation of Israel. This church is reflected in local assemblies of believers, who voluntarily have banded together for the purposes of baptizing, observing the Lord's Supper, edification, evangelism, worship, fellowship, prayer, and equipping for service to one another. These churches are led by qualified men called pastor/elders, who have been gifted by Christ. These men are to be recognized by and accountable to fellow members of their local church, and will ultimately give an account to Jesus, the head of the church for how they led and shepherded the flock of God in their local church. All members—both men and women—are called to be subject to the loving sacrificial leadership of their elders.

Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4-16; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:5; 2:42; 11:16; 20:28; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Romans 12:3-12.

Only two ordinances for the church were established by Jesus Christ, and followed by the Apostles and the early church: baptism of believers (by immersion in water) and the Lord's Supper. Both are to be practiced today.

Matthew 26:26-29; 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 1:13; 11:17-34.

Gender, Marriage, & Family

God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female, equal in value and dignity, but distinct in roles. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Therefore, rejection of one's biological sex or adopting a transgender self-conception is a rejection of God's design.

God's design from creation is that marriage be a covenant between one man and one woman, as a sacred reflection of Christ's faithful union with His Church. Therefore, "gay marriage" and polygamy are not biblical marriage. God commands that sexual intimacy occur only within marriage. Therefore, all sex outside of the covenant of marriage are sins against God, including lust, fornication, pornography, adultery, homosexual or bisexual behavior, polyamory, and incest. The grace of God in Jesus is sufficient to forgive all sins, including sexual sins, and to give power for holiness to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity.

Furthermore, because God loves marriage, He hates divorce, permitting it only where there has been sexual immorality, or desertion by an unbeliever (actual or functional abandonment of the marital covenant). A believer who was faithful through a divorce that had biblical grounds is also free to marry again.

While some men and women are called to a life of singleness which enables undivided service to God and His church, God's command from creation to mankind is to be fruitful and multiply through marriage and family. In the family, the wife is to respectfully subject herself to the leadership of her husband, as unto Christ. The husband is the head of his wife, and is commanded to sacrificially love her, as Christ loved the church. Children are a gift from God and are fully human from conception. Parents are to train their children by modeling a godly life, teaching them the Scriptures, disciplining them in love, and providing them a resource of wisdom and counsel. Children are to obey their parents with respect and honor.

We believe that abuse (such as the physical, emotional, or sexual harm, or exploitation of another person) is sin and is destructive, evil, and in direct opposition to the purposes of God. Abuse must not be tolerated in the Christian community, and we believe God calls us to protect, help, and love people who have been abused.

Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18-24; Malachi 2:14-16; 1 Timothy 2:12, 3:2; Matthew 5:32, 19:9, 4-6; 1 Corinthians 7 (1 Corinthians 7:12-15, 32-35); Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 21:1-4.

Spiritual Gifts

Because Christ's Church is a body, its various parts minister to each other through the power, graces, and gifts given by the Spirit of God, each believer gifted for ministry to others.

Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Hebrews 2:3, 4; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.

We affirm six things:

1. Further revelation, whether through prophecy, tongues, or interpretation, is unnecessary in the church today, and such claims to revelation tend not only to undermine the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, but lead many into instability, heresy, and division, often elevating experience over the Word of God. Jeremiah 23:16-32; 2 Timothy 3:5-17; Matthew 5:18.
2. Today's "speaking in tongues" (ecstatic utterance) is not to be identified with the first century gift of the supernatural ability to suddenly speak foreign languages, either in essence, practice, purpose, or effects. Acts 2:1-13.
3. While God can and does heal, such healings must be judged on their own merit, and much of what passes for healing today bears little resemblance to the healings recorded in the gospels and the book of Acts, which also included raising the dead. Matthew 9:18-34; John 11:43, 44; Acts 3:6-9; James 5:14-16.
4. The Holy Spirit, the giver of gifts, has given warnings of charismatic excess, proper guidelines for the use of the gifts, and clear statements of the priority of the proclaimed Word as the key means of instruction, in 1 Corinthians chapters 1, 2, 12, 13, and 14.

5. Sickness and poverty both were present in the lives of the apostles, their associates, and the early church, and should not be judged abnormal, or as signs of unbelief. John 9:3; Philippians 2:26, 27; 2 Corinthians 8:2; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20.
6. Since miracles of all sorts can be performed by Satan and will be signs of the end-times and of the Antichrist, the believer must be most cautious in endorsing a given manifestation as from God. Matthew 24:11, 23-25; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Revelation 13:13-15.

Last Things

When we come to the end of what the Bible calls "the last days," Jesus will return to receive His people, and to establish His kingdom upon the earth. The dead in Christ will rise first and living believers will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. He will judge all men, both the living and the dead, according to their deeds.

All of those who have opposed God will be cast, with Satan (the tempter and deceiver who, as a fallen angel, is the chief enemy of his creator-God) and his demons, into the lake of fire to be tormented forever apart from God. This is "the second death." Believers, in contrast, will be raised to eternal life, and will enjoy the unbroken fellowship of God forever, in the new heavens and new earth. They will be conformed spiritually and bodily to the image of Jesus Christ, God's Son, and will remain forever in His likeness, and in fellowship with Him, the Father, and the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:1-12; 2 Peter 3:8-13; Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 5:1ff; 20:1-22:21; Romans 8:21-30; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57.

Sanctification

Knowledge of all the above gives the believer encouragement and reason to be faithful to his Lord, for whose return he looks, and whose will he has the heart to obey, even in the face of opposition. In this life, the believer must be ever watchful in prayer, and active in resisting Satan, fleeing temptations, and "putting to death" the deeds of the flesh.

Ample provisions of grace and wisdom are granted the believer for the purpose of living skillfully and successfully in this present age-including the promises and precepts of Scripture, the power of the Spirit, and the fellowship of the church. Although perfection is not possible in this life, the power of sin over the believer has been broken by the death of Christ, so that it no longer "reigns over" him. This fact allows the believer to find freedom from habitual sin and addictive behaviors. The normal Christian life is one of obedience, peace, and joy.

2 Peter 1:3-11; 3:11-13; 1 John 2:3-6; 3:2, 3; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Romans 6:1-23; 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 15:58; Acts 14:22; Matthew 13:19-23; Philippians 2:12, 13; 4:4-8; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 John 2:14-17; 2 Timothy 3:16.

Appendix B

Constitution

I. Name, Organization, and Property

The official name of this corporation is Grace Bible Church of Lorton, Virginia. This corporation may be referred to as "church" in this constitution or any other document, and may do business as "Grace Bible Church." This church is a nonprofit corporation under Virginia state law.

The purposes, objectives, and beliefs of this church are set forth in its mission statement and its confession of faith. All property and assets of Grace Bible Church shall be owned by the church. Decisions on the disposition of the property and assets are to be made by the elder team acting on behalf of the covenant members.

II. Covenant Membership

Grace Bible Church is a New Testament church. As such, we are a group of believers who covenant or agree together to submit ourselves to one another and to the principles of church order as outlined in the New Testament by Jesus and His apostles. A "believer" is one who has a living, personal relationship with Jesus Christ, having received Him as Savior and Lord. The New Testament calls these believers "disciples."

We believe the teaching of our Lord Jesus, and the practice of the early church, in baptizing disciples after they have believed.

We believe that ownership, participation, and accountability are infinitely more important than merely "belonging" to a church as a formality, so we invite all those who desire to participate actively to become a covenant member. In order to become a covenant member of Grace Bible Church, an individual, along with an elder representing the elder team, must sign the Grace Bible Church Covenant. In agreeing to covenant together, the elders pledge to see that each covenant member is properly disciplined.

We understand being a part of a community of faith to mean having a willingness to participate actively with the other believers in this church in fulfilling Christ's commands (to most specifically include making disciples; see Matthew 28:18-20) and the "one-anothers" of the New Testament. We invite all believers or disciples who share our common faith to join with us. However, we respect our sister evangelical churches, and will honor their decisions to exclude those who have come under their censure or discipline.

III. Wisdom from Covenant Members

To pursue unity within the church and to gain wisdom from the covenant members, the elders will present to the church any major decisions, such as (but not limited to) proposed future elders or deacons, any cases of discipline and/or restoration, proposed changes in location, proposed sale or purchase of real property, proposed changes in: the confession of faith, covenant, or in any proposed modification(s) or addition(s) to this constitution.

With any of these matters, sufficient time must be given to the covenant members to exercise sound judgment and responsibility. Under normal circumstances, when possible, a period of at least thirty (30) days should be given after a general announcement in order for the church to hear and consider the persons and the issues involved, and to give input and make responses. Anonymous input will not be considered. After this period of time, with the wisdom of the covenant membership in mind, the elder Team shall reach a final decision and must formally bring the outcome before the church and an appropriate public statement made by the elder team to the church which reflects the elders' consideration of wisdom from the covenant members.

Such public statements and actions may be at regularly scheduled meetings of the church or at specially called meetings, provided that two weeks' notice has been given to the church.

IV. Elders and Deacons — Appointment and Accountability

We recognize two New Testament offices:

1. **Elders:** The leadership of the congregation is vested in elders, who are responsible for the spiritual oversight (i.e. feeding the flock (John 21:15; Acts 6:4; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2, 5:17-18; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9), overseeing the flock (1 Tim. 3:1, 3:4-5, 5:17; Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thes. 5:12; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2; Heb. 13:17), caring for the flock (Acts 20:28), and protecting the flock (Acts 20:28-30; Titus 3:10) that is entrusted to them by Jesus) of all of the covenant members. All Grace Bible Church groups, committees, and ministries are accountable to the elders, who are stewards of these before God and the congregation. Such men comprise an elder team that collectively guides the whole congregation according to the precepts of Scripture. These same men make up the board of directors of Grace Bible Church of Lorton, Virginia Incorporated.

The process that shall be followed for the nomination, candidacy, and appointment of an elder will accord with this constitution and the *Handbook for Elders of Grace Bible Church*.

Elders are accountable first and most importantly to the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 4:1-2a; Heb. 13:17). Elders are also accountable to the plurality of elders they mutually submit to (Heb. 13:17). Finally, as covenant members of the church, the elders are accountable to the other covenant members of the church (1 Tim. 5:19-21).

2. **Deacons:** Under the direction and oversight of the elder team, deacons seek to attend to the delegated ministry needs of our local church (Acts 6:1-6). This service enables the elders to devote themselves "to prayer and to the teaching of the word" (Acts 6:4).

The process that shall be followed for the nomination, candidacy, and appointment of a deacon will accord with this constitution.

Deacons are accountable to the elders of the church (i.e. Acts 6:3). As members of the church, the deacons are also accountable to the other covenant members of the church (i.e. Matt. 18:15-20).

Gaining wisdom from the covenant members of the church, according to Section III of this constitution, is required for the appointment of all elders and deacons, who are to meet the qualifications for their offices as set forth in the New Testament passages of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 8-13, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

The elders of the church shall at least once per year give a full accounting of the church's financial resources to the congregation, and its books shall be open to any legitimate inquiry of its covenant members.

V. Staff

All staff members are those so designated by the elders as they and the congregation may have need. These persons are responsible to the elder team.

VI. Pastors

Staff elders shall be appointed by the elder team, which is responsible to search for and screen candidates, using the applicable processes that accords with this constitution and the *Handbook for Elders*. As a matter of wisdom, the elder team will select a lead pastor, and may select additional staff elders who will be known as associate pastors. Staff elders are held accountable to the same standards as the rest of the elder team (see Section IV.1). Staff elders are expected to use electronic communication, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and regular elder meetings to keep the full elder team apprised of all matters relevant to the shepherding and oversight of Grace Bible Church.

Appendix C

Restoration Policy

Restoration: A Demonstration of God's Sovereignty Over Human Failure Through Redemption

I. Introduction

These procedures seek to honor God by relying on Scripture for principles pertaining to church discipline. We believe in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture and that church discipline is a reliance upon God's grace through restoring discipline.

Scripture makes clear that one function of a local church is for members to come alongside other members to assist each other towards godly living. That includes:

1. A Christian who becomes aware of a brother or sister who is living in sin or who has been offended by that person's sin should go and speak to the sinning brother/sister in private (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3-4; Galatians 6:1-2). In the spirit of unity and Christian love it is important to keep the information within the smallest possible circle of individuals, as evidenced in Matthew 18:15-16. If the sinning believer confesses, repents, and seeks forgiveness where necessary, then the issue has been resolved and restoration has been achieved (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3; 1 John 1:9).
2. If the sinning believer is unrepentant and/or continues in sin after being privately confronted ("he does not listen", Matthew 18:16), the confronting brother/sister should "take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." (Matthew 18:16; see also Deuteronomy 19:15; John 8:17; 2 Corinthians 13:1). If the sinning believer confesses, repents, and seeks forgiveness where necessary, then the issue has been resolved and restoration has been achieved (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3; 1 John 1:9).
3. God has ordained elders to protect the church (Acts 20:28), to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight" (1 Peter 5:1), and "to give an account" (Hebrews 13:17) to Jesus in the end for how they kept watch over the souls of those who are under their care. If the prescribed efforts above do not result in the restoration of the sinning believer, the charges should be brought to the attention of an elder. It is then incumbent upon the elder team to determine, through an investigation (see Restoration Investigation), if they can affirm the charges believed to be established. Under exceptional circumstances, the elders may exercise their authority to take precautionary measures prior to the completion and outcome of the investigation. Additionally, this process should not replace or delay any appropriate engagement with legal/civil authorities.
4. If the elders can affirm the charges believed to be established, then the elders will tell the Covenant Membership of the individual and situation, so that they can, in love, pursue the unrepentant believer to call him/her to repentance, and to make reconciliation where needed (Matthew 18:17). If the sinning believer confesses, repents, and seeks forgiveness where necessary, then the issue has been resolved and restoration has been achieved (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3; 1 John 1:9).
5. If the unrepentant believer remains unrepentant after pursuit by the Covenant Membership, the sober wisdom from Jesus is to, "...let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:17). This is "excommunication". The Covenant Membership can now no longer publicly affirm the unrepentant sinner's profession of faith and thus are to consider him/her to be an unbeliever. As a result, the person is removed from Covenant Membership and may not participate in the Lord's Table. This is not forbidding the excommunicated person from attending the corporate worship services, though it may, depending on the seriousness of the sin. The desire is for everyone to come and hear and respond to the gospel. There is still hope for restoration at some point.

II. Purposes of Church Discipline

Church discipline has three specific purposes:

1. To restore unrepentant believers to fellowship with God and His church (Matthew 18:12-14; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, 7:8-10; Galatians 6:1-2; 1 Timothy 1:20; James 5:19-20). God views efforts to restore unrepentant believers as a blessing and a sign of genuine love demonstrated by the church (Psalm 94:12; Proverbs 6:23; Revelation 3:19). Conversely, God views a failure to do so as being unloving and hateful (Leviticus 19:17; Proverbs 5:23; Proverbs 13:24).
2. To guard and preserve the honor of God (Romans 2:24; 1 Corinthians 10:31).
3. To protect the purity of the church and to guard other Christians from being tempted, misled, divided, or otherwise harmed (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:6; 1 Timothy 5:19-20).

III. Applicability of Church Discipline

Church discipline is applicable only to GBC Covenant Members (those who have signed the GBC Covenant, thus agreeing to abide by principles and procedures in this document).

Further, excommunication is only applicable after the steps in Section I.1-4 have been faithfully completed and if the sinning believer continues unrepentantly in sin after having been pursued by the Covenant Membership.

Since elders are charged to protect God's flock from threats, both spiritual and physical, if non-members are posing a serious threat to the flock of God at Grace Bible Church (GBC), the elders of GBC shall carry out their charge in ways consistent with applicable Scriptural principles (Acts 20:28-30; Titus 3:10-11; 2 Peter 2; Rev. 2:20-29).

IV. Warrants for Church Discipline

Outwardly observable, unrepentant sins that are serious enough to warrant the implementation of church discipline, are those of:

1. Conduct or practice that disturbs the peace, purity, and/or unity of the church (see, for example, Galatians 5:19-21; Proverbs 6:16-19).
2. Denial of doctrine, as set forth in GBC's Confession of Faith, that would constitute a denial of a credible profession of faith.

V. The Case of Severe Sin

The normative approach to church discipline is summarized in Section I above. That said, Scripture also indicates, if the sin is severe in nature, excommunication might need to be wisely and rightly administered quickly for the protection of the body (1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 11-13; Titus 3:10-11). This action shall be communicated to the excommunicated person in writing and then to the Covenant Membership, so that everyone can understand the full implications.

VI. The Investigation

The investigation to affirm the charges believed to be established, referenced in Section I.3, is necessary to determine if the sinning believer ought to be brought before the whole Covenant Membership. The Elder Team will presume the innocence of the accused during the investigation.

Only after the elders' investigation will a determination be made as to whether the elders can affirm the charges believed to be established. If the charges believed to be established *are* affirmed by the elders, then the unrepentant believer will be identified before the Covenant Membership, so that

they can, in love, pursue the unrepentant believer to call him/her to repentance, and to make reconciliation where needed (Matthew 18:17b).

VII. The Investigation Process

- 1.** At any point in the investigation process, if the accused confesses, repents, and seeks forgiveness where necessary, then the issue has been resolved and restoration has been achieved (Matthew 18:15d-e; Luke 17:3; 1 John 1:9). All involved will respond accordingly from that point by graciously accepting true repentance. The repentant believer must then commit to accountability with an elder or one person selected by the elder team in a spirit of harmony and unity.
- 2.** If the investigation process is entered, the elders will notify the accused at the start of the investigation process in writing and include the following:
 - a.** Explain the purpose of implementing this process.
 - b.** Explain that this is not excommunication and that he/she is presumed innocent while going through the investigation. The elders desire to show compassion and love to all those involved, to include the accused.
 - c.** The investigation shall be undertaken expeditiously. But, in an effort to honor God and love all involved, it will also be careful and wise. As a result, the number of meetings required beyond the first two meetings outlined below, shall be determined by the elder team.
 - d.** Set forth the charges of sin believed to be established.
 - e.** Request the accused to appear before the elders at a specific time and place.
- 3.** Minutes will be taken of all proceedings, and the accused will be provided one copy.
- 4.** Witnesses and evidence shall meet the following requirements:
 - a.** Any person may be a witness if the elders are satisfied that he/she has sufficient competence to speak the truth concerning the matters before the elders.
 - b.** Evidence must be factual in nature.
 - i.** It may be direct or circumstantial. Caution should be exercised in giving weight to evidence that is purely circumstantial.
 - ii.** The accused may object to the competency of any witness and to the authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any testimony or evidence produced in support of the charges. The elders shall decide on all such objections after allowing the accused to be heard in support thereof.
 - iii.** The testimony of at least two witnesses shall be sufficient to establish the truth of any specification.
 - iv.** If the accused so requests, no witness, unless a member of the elders, shall testify in the presence of another witness who is to testify concerning the same specification.
- 5.** The accused shall be entitled to the assistance of wise counsel. Only GBC Covenant Members, who are in good standing, shall be eligible.

6. At the first meeting, only the following actions may be taken:
 - a. The specific charges of sin shall be formally presented to the accused, along with the names of any witnesses and copies of any documents that may be presented against him/her;
 - b. The elders shall fix the time, date, and place for a second meeting which shall not be less than ten days later, and shall issue invitations requesting all necessary persons to appear; and
 - c. The accused shall be given the opportunity to inform the elders of wise counsel and/or witnesses whom he/she wishes to include in the process. (See Section VII.4.a and VII.5.)
7. At the second meeting, the participating elders will hear evidence concerning the issues of sin.
 - a. The accused shall be called to admit or deny the specific areas of sin. If he/she denies the area of sin in his/her life, the elders shall proceed to receive evidence.
 - b. If the accused refuses or fails to appear without satisfactory reason for his/her absence at the time appointed, he/she shall again be notified in writing of another time, place, and date at which to appear.
 - c. This writing will contain a warning that, if he/she does not appear, the elders will proceed to adjudicate the matter in his/her absence.
8. The number of meetings required shall be determined by the elder team.
9. At the conclusion of the final meeting, the accused may make a final argument with respect to the evidence and specifications before the elders.

This concludes the Investigation.

VIII. Investigation Outcomes

1. At the conclusion of the investigation, the elders, after deliberation amongst themselves about the validity of the specifications and evidence presented, shall vote on each charge separately, following Section 12 of the Handbook for Elders, to affirm the establishment of the charges originally brought to them. The elders will sustain a specification or charge only when they conclude that it is established by a preponderance of the evidence.
2. If the elders decide that the accused is not guilty of any charges, notification will be given to all parties involved. Any reconciliation with the parties involved will be pursued. If it is determined that the accused was intentionally falsely accused, the elders shall call those who lied (or sinfully judged) to repent of their sins and seek forgiveness.
3. If the elders decide that the accused is guilty of any charge, they shall again call upon the (now) unrepentant believer to repent of his/her sin, turn to Jesus for forgiveness, and to make reconciliation where needed.
 - a. If he/she confesses, repents, and seeks forgiveness where necessary, then the issue has been resolved and restoration has been achieved (Matthew 18:15d-e; Luke 17:3; 1 John 1:9).
 - b. All involved will respond accordingly from that point by graciously accepting true repentance. The repentant believer must then commit to accountability with an elder or one person selected by the elder team in a spirit of harmony and unity.

4. If the unrepentant believer still refuses to repent, the elders will "tell it to the church." (Matthew 18:17a) What is communicated to the Covenant Membership shall be presented, in writing, to the unrepentant believer.
5. The Covenant Membership will be informed of who the unrepentant believer is and any necessary information about the nature of the established charges.
 - a. The Covenant Membership will then be exhorted to, in love, pursue the unrepentant believer to call him/her to repentance and to make reconciliation where needed. In following the GBC Constitution, the Covenant Membership will be given at least 30 days to do so.
 - b. There will be a summary of the process that has thus far been taken (outlined above).
6. At the end of the time period given to the Covenant Membership to pursue the unrepentant believer, "if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." (Matthew 18:17). This is excommunication.
 - a. The Covenant Membership can now no longer publicly affirm the unrepentant sinner's profession of faith and thus are to consider him/her to be an unbeliever.
 - b. As a result, the person is removed from Covenant Membership and may not participate in the Lord's Table.
 - c. This is not forbidding the excommunicated person from attending the corporate worship services, though it may, depending on the seriousness of the sin. The desire is for everyone to come and hear and respond to the gospel. There is still hope for restoration at some point.
7. The final verdict shall be communicated to the excommunicated person in writing and then to the Covenant Membership, so that everyone can understand the full implications.

Appendix D

GBC (Pastoral) Staff Absence and Leave Policy

Effective as of April 2023

It is the intent of this policy to establish guidelines for all paid staff of Grace Bible Church in Lorton, VA (GBC). All staff should seek to be above reproach in their work practices and are subject to oversight and correction by the pastors and/or the elders of GBC.

Full-Time Salaried Staff

Full-time Staff are those working at least 40 hours per week on a year- round basis. As salaried staff, they may be required to work more than 40 hours depending on the needs of ministry. They will receive the following benefits:

Vacation Leave

- Full-time staff with up to 5 years of full-time employment with GBC will receive 15 days of paid vacation leave per year, accumulated at a rate of 4.61 hours per bi-weekly pay period.
- Full-time staff with 5 or more years of full-time employment with GBC will receive 20 days of paid vacation leave per year, accumulated at a rate of 6.15 hours per bi-weekly pay period.

Each employee is encouraged to take vacation leave annually, and to do so for extended periods, for the purpose of rest and rejuvenation. Vacation leave should be taken in full-day (8 hour) increments, coordinated with other pastors and staff, and reported in writing to payroll administrator within a week of its use. Accrued vacation leave is limited to 15 days (120 hours) at the end of a calendar year. Any excess over that maximum is forfeited each January 1st.

The work week is understood to be five days. Staff members are encouraged to take their allowance of two days off per week. It is understood that fulfilling the responsibilities of full-time ministry often requires more than 40 hours per week. There is no formal timekeeping system, and therefore no formal accounting for compensatory time. Therefore, within reasonable boundaries, full-time staff may use their discretion in adjusting their standard schedules to account for fluctuations in work required and to account for minor absences due to family or personal commitments. Those reasonable boundaries include:

- As a courtesy to other staff members and church members, full time staff should seek to maintain a standard and well-known work schedule consistent with the demands of ministry.
- All adjustments to standard schedules should be coordinated ahead of time whenever possible.
- Over the course of a given calendar month, time worked should average to *at least* 40 hours per week and will often exceed that threshold given the lifestyle nature of full-time ministry.

Holidays

Full-time staff will receive holiday leave for Federally recognized holidays.

For those holidays that fall on a day that is one of the two days off per week, or on a day when the staff member must work or chooses to work, the paid holiday leave may be taken on any other day within the calendar year, coordinated with others pastors and staff.

Medical Leave

There is no specified limit to medical leave that can be taken by full-time staff. Medical leave may be taken for the purposes of personal sickness, injury, or medical appointments, or for sickness, injury, or medical appointments of a spouse or children. In the event that a staff member must take more than two consecutive weeks of medical leave, continuation of paid medical leave is subject to the approval of the elders.

Conference / Education Leave

For full-time staff, job-relevant conferences and educational opportunities can be valuable to their execution of their roles. Therefore, pastors with 5 or more years of full-time employment with Grace Bible Church are afforded up to 10 days of paid conference / education leave. Directors, ministry leaders, and pastors with less than 5 years of full-time employment with Grace Bible Church are afforded up to 5 days of paid conference / education leave.

Excess conference / education time, and conference / education time for support staff, may be allowed subject to the approval of the elders and granted with or without pay on a case-by-case basis.

Other Leave

Administrative leave will be granted on a case-by-case basis for legally required absences (i.e., jury duty), bereavement of immediate family members, or severe weather conditions. Leave without pay may also be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Pastors may be away from the office for the purposes of prayer, sermon planning and preparation, congregational care, or participation in elder-approved short-term mission trips consistent with the short-term mission policy. These absences are not considered leave.

Sabbaticals for Full-Time & Part-Time Pastoral Staff

Full-time and part-time paid pastoral staff will receive a sabbatical benefit after six years of service to GBC. The sabbatical will consist of 12 weeks of additional paid vacation leave at their regular full-time/part-time rate of pay, to be taken in a continuous block of leave. Additionally, the church will set aside an allotment of up to \$7,500 to cover travel expenses, tuition and fees, or any other sabbatical-related expenses. The timing of the sabbatical is subject to the approval of the elders. Additional sabbaticals may be taken after each completion of six years of service.

Part-Time Salaried Staff

Part-time Salaried Staff are expected to ensure their responsibilities are executed consistent with the schedule and job description agreed upon with the pastors/elders. Salary will be paid as long as responsibilities are satisfied according to expectations. They receive no specific paid-time off benefits.