



CONSTITUTION

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CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE 1: OVERVIEW

- A. **NAME:** GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH of Erie, Pennsylvania
- B. **ORGANIZATION:** the organization took place on March 17, 1895
- C. **INCORPORATION:** this organization is incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- D. **AFFILIATION:** this Church is affiliated with the Mideast Baptist Conference and the Baptist General Conference. This affiliation is a voluntary matter; Grace Baptist Church is an autonomous body of believers that is led and governed solely by a Board of Elders, which is staffed entirely by members of Grace Baptist Church, and answerable to the congregation.
- E. **PURPOSE:** Grace Baptist Church exists to make and to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE 2: STATEMENT OF FAITH

Approved by the Board of Elders January 24, 2006

A. THE TRIUNE GOD

There is one God who exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each person being fully God. God the Father is the Creator and Lord of the universe who both governs all things according to His will and is accomplishing His purpose in the world and in the Church. Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly human, the only mediator between God and humanity. God the Holy Spirit is necessary for the individual's new birth and growth to maturity. The Holy Spirit empowers and indwells the Church as well as each individual believer.

- *Genesis. 1:1, 26; Isaiah 45:21-22; Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 4:4-6; Luke 10:21-22; John 1:1-4; Revelation 4:11; I Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 2:9; Colossians 1:16-17; John 3:16; Titus 3:5,6; Jude 20-21; John 14:16-17, 26*

B. THE BIBLE

The Holy Scripture in its entirety is inspired by God's Spirit through human authors and constitutes the revelation of God's truth to humanity. It is trustworthy and without error in its original manuscripts in all that it affirms. Whatever the Bible, rightly interpreted, teaches, followers of Christ are bound to believe and obey. It is the supreme authority in every matter of belief and conduct, and it establishes moral absolutes for the human race.

- *II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21; Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; John 17:17; I John 2:5*

C. THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

All human beings are created in God's own likeness and therefore have inherent value and equality before God. All human life is in the image of God and is sacred.

- *Genesis 1:27; Ephesians 1:4-13; Psalm 139; Jeremiah 1:4-5; Acts 17:28.*

D. THE HUMAN CONDITION

Humanity is hopelessly lost by imputation of sin as a result of Adam's sin as well as by personal sinful acts. This sin and guilt have rendered mankind subject to God's wrath and condemnation and have resulted in humanity's alienation from God's life, suppression of God's truth, and hostility to God's law. God's love desires all to come to repentance and to be reconciled rather than condemned.

- *Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Jeremiah 17:9; Acts 3:19; Acts 16:31; John 1:12-13; Titus 3:5*

E. SALVATION

Salvation from the guilt and penalty of sin has been achieved solely through the work of Jesus Christ – His perfect obedience, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection and exaltation to heaven as Lord. Apart from Christ, there is salvation through no person, Church, creed, process, or power. Each sinner is justified before God and reconciled to God only by divine grace appropriated by faith alone, apart from human merit or good works. Authentic salvation is evidenced by a transformed life.

- *Romans 5:12-19; Romans 10:9-10; John 3:16; John 14:6; Ephesians 2:3-9; II Corinthians 13:5-6; James 2:14-26*

F. THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

There is one, holy and universal Church, which is the Body of Christ, and to which all true believers belong. As the Father sent the Son into the world, so the Lord Jesus Christ sends his Church to participate in God's mission by words and works. In this mission the Church is called to proclaim the gospel of God's grace, to baptize and make disciples among all nations, to exhibit God's character through compassionate care for the needy; to push back the forces of evil, and to demonstrate to humanity the reality of God's kingdom.

- *Matthew 28:19-20; Matthew 22:37-40; Isaiah 61:1-3; Acts 1:8; Matthew 25:34-45*

G. LAST THINGS

As the Lord Jesus ascended to his Father, so He will return literally, physically, and in glory. He will raise the dead and bring salvation and judgment to final completion. All humanity will be resurrected for judgment and entrance into either eternal life or eternal hell. There is no second opportunity for salvation after death and all who did not trust Christ will stand condemned. God will then fully establish his Kingdom and finish the new creation - a new heaven and a new earth from which all evil and evildoers, all suffering and death, will be excluded and in which God will be glorified forever.

- *Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 20:4-6; I Corinthians 15:42-44, 51-52; John 5:28, 29; Revelation 20:11-15; Matthew 25:46.*

ARTICLE 3: MEMBERSHIP

- A. The membership of this Church shall consist of persons who confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, who give satisfactory evidence of regeneration by living their lives consistently with their profession and with the views of faith, doctrine and practice of this Church, who have been baptized by immersion, and who have been received into its membership according to the By-Laws of this Church.

ARTICLE 4: LEADERSHIP/ ORGANIZATION

- A. **CONGREGATIONAL** – Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the Congregation of the Church is the final authority within this local Church. This authority is normally exercised through the election of leaders to govern the Church. However, the entire congregation reserves voting authority on some matters in accordance with the By-Laws of this Church.
- B. **ELECTED LEADERS** – The primary oversight and leadership of the Church shall be vested in a plurality of Elders who are responsible for governing the Church, teaching the Word, and tending the flock of God in this Church. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. Their lives should be characterized by the qualifications set out in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Other elected leadership positions, such as Trustees, may be determined by the Elders as they are needed for the proper functioning of the Church body.
- C. **MINISTRY STAFF** – The leadership and management of the day to day ministry activities of the Church shall be entrusted to a qualified ministry staff that is normally paid for their service as a vocation.

- D. MINISTRY TEAMS** – The day to day ministry activities of the Church shall be carried out by ministry teams who are equipped and authorized by the staff and leaders to do the work of ministry. These teams should be organized according to appropriate spiritual gifts and passions for the task at hand.

ARTICLE 5: CHURCH PROPERTY

A. DIVISION

1. In the case of an organic division of the Church membership, the Church property and name shall belong to those members who abide by this Constitution.
2. Should any controversy arise, in this case, as to who is abiding by this Constitution, the question shall be submitted to the appropriate leadership Board of the Mideast Baptist Conference, and their decision shall be final.

B. DISSOLUTION

1. In the event that conditions arise that result in the dissolution of this Church corporation, with the result that there is no continuing body to operate under the articles of this Constitution, the Church property shall be transferred to the Mideast Baptist Conference, or if it is disbanded, to the Baptist General Conference.

C. CONSOLIDATION

1. Should conditions arise where consolidation with another Church of the same denomination is advisable, the Elders, in conjunction with other elected leaders, shall be authorized by the Church to negotiate (subject to congregation approval) the terms of such consolidation insofar as property is concerned.

ARTICLE 6: REVISIONS, ADDITIONS, ADDENDUMS

- A.** It is recognized that the adoption of this Constitution makes null and void any and all previous Constitutions of this Church.
- B.** The Church may amend this Constitution in any way that it deems necessary, but any proposed amendments must first be submitted to the Elders for consideration, approval, and recommendation to the Church. Presentation of amendments to the congregation shall be done in writing prior to (six [6] weeks in advance) a business meeting of the Church. An affirmative vote of at least three-quarters (3/4) of the qualified members present and voting shall be required for amendments of the constitution. A quorum shall consist of one-fifth (1/5) of the Church membership eligible to vote.
- C.** The Elders may amend the by-laws of this Constitution in any way that they deem necessary, but any proposed amendments must first be submitted to the Church for review in writing and a period of six (6) weeks must be granted to receive feedback and input from the congregation. Finalized amendments should then be communicated to the Church in writing. An affirmative three-quarter (3/4) majority vote is required of the Elders for amendments of the By-Laws.