

Constitution of

*Grace
Community
Chapel*

5th Revision November 2024

CONSTITUTION OF GRACE COMMUNITY CHAPEL

I. Article 1

The name of this church shall be Grace Community Chapel, located on Route 126 in West Gardiner, Maine.

II. Article 2

OUR MISSION

To reach and disciple the families of our community, and throughout the world, for Jesus Christ.

III. Article 3

STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. The Word of God

We believe the Bible, composed of the Old and New Testaments, is God's inspired and infallible Word in its original manuscripts and is the supreme and final authority for all matters of faith and practice. Psalm 119:11, 89, 105, 140; Isaiah 40:8; John 5:39; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21.

2. God

We believe there is one God, eternally existent, infinite in holiness and all other perfections, who reveals Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, without division of Nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His creation. He is all-powerful, knowing, present, wise and loving. Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 40:18, 25, 28-29; Jeremiah 10:10; Acts 17:24-29.

B. God the Son

We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life and miracles, in His substitutionary, atoning death, in His physical bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father and His personal return in glory and power. Genesis 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53; John 1:1-14, 29; John 14:1-3,6; John 20:1-20, 30-31; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 1:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Colossians 1:3-22; Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Hebrews 1:3

C. God the Holy Spirit

We believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit, who inspired men to write the Scriptures. He reveals Christ to men, and convicts of sin, regenerates repentant sinners, and cultivates Christ-like character. John 16:8-11, 13-14; Acts 1:8; Acts 5:1-4; Acts 13:2; 2 Peter 1:20-21.

3. Man

We believe that man was created in the image of God, but by willful choice sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Man is born in sin, is a sinner by practice and by Divine decree. Unregenerate man is under the condemnation of God and in need of Salvation. Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3; Psalm 51:5; John 3:18; Romans 3:9-10; Romans 5:12-21; Romans 6:23

4. Salvation

We believe that the only salvation from condemnation is received through faith in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that this salvation is a free gift of God's love and grace. John 1:12; John 3:16; John 4:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 5:8; Romans 6:23; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8-9

5. The Church

A. Local

We believe that a New Testament Church is a local body of believers united in Christ, who have been baptized post confession of faith, regularly gathering for worship, preaching, and observing the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Who engage together for service, and to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world. (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Matthew 18:20; Acts 2:42-47)

B. Universal

We believe in the Church Universal, the body of Christ, which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages. Matthew 16:15-19; Acts 2:41-47; Acts 6:3-6; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 7:17; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 3:1-15; Revelation 2-3

6. **Ordinances**

We believe in two ordinances commanded by the Lord Jesus. Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is to be administered only upon profession of faith publically, by immersion*, to declare our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior.

The Lord's Supper is for believers who upon self-examination remember the Lord's death and anticipate His second coming. Matthew 3:13-17; Matthew 26:26-29; Matthew 28:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; Acts 8:26-39; Acts 16:30-33; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

7. **Eternal State**

We believe in the resurrection of the just and the unjust. The just, having been redeemed by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be with Him throughout eternity in glory; the unjust, having died an unregenerate man, un-reconciled to God, to eternal condemnation in hell. Matthew 18:8-9; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 16:19-31; John 14:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:35-58; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 9:27; 2 Peter 3:7; Revelation 20:11-15

8. **Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality**

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Genesis 1:26-27.) Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Genesis 2:18-25.) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4.) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. (Matthew 15:18-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.)

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Grace Community Chapel as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Grace Community Chapel members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Grace Community Chapel in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22.)

*Exceptions to immersion discussed in Article 1 Section 1 § 1

8. **Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality Contined**

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.)

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31.) Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Grace Community Chapel.

J. **Sanctity of Human Life**

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Psalm 139.)

Final Authority for Matters of Belief and Conduct

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of Grace Community Chapel's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our Elder's Board is the church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

GRACE COMMUNITY CHAPEL BY-LAWS

Article I

Membership

Section 1. **Qualifications and Terms for Membership**

1. Any person who received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and has been baptized after making a confession of faith may be a candidate for Grace Community Chapel membership. Any believer who is not yet baptized and unable to be baptized by immersion may become a candidate for membership per the discretion of the Elders following an appropriate method of expression of their public faith in accordance with the commands of the scriptures. Candidates shall meet with the majority of the Elders and review the Covenant of Membership together. Upon agreement with and the signing of the covenant in Appendix 1 of the constitution, having been witnessed and dated by an Elder, the candidate is welcomed as a member. The member is presented to the church on the next Sunday service possible for presentation to the fellowship.
2. At the discretion of the Elder Board, Grace Community Chapel may remove a person from membership because of church discipline, based upon the Covenant of Membership, Constitution, and by-laws of Grace Community Chapel, or due to lack of attendance after an extended period of time. Multiple attempts shall be made to notify a person before possible removal from membership. A person may appeal this action by requesting a hearing before the Elders. An updated membership roster shall be provided to the congregation annually and always available by reasonable request. It is the responsibility of members to notify the Elder Board of any clerical errors.
3. The voting age of members is 18 years old.
4. Transfer of membership will be given upon request when the member is in good standing with Grace Community Chapel. Release of membership will be given to any member upon request.

Section 2: Discipline

1. The term “Discipline” refers to the method of correction of problems and difficulties in the church body. It is a procedure including Christian teaching, training, admonition, and also rebuke (both public and private) with a view to helping the individual Christian to grow spiritually and to eliminate unchristian attitudes and practices. An attitude of prayer, love, patience, calmness, and understanding shall be the foundation in all matters of church discipline.
2. Matters requiring discipline: A member of Grace Community Chapel shall be subject to church discipline for:
 - A. Difference between individuals – the order of Matthew 18:15-17 shall be followed to resolve disharmony between members.
 - B. Heresy – Members who hold and or consistently spread false doctrine shall be subject to church discipline; Titus 3:10
 - C. Public sin – Members found walking disorderly, in a manner unbecoming to a Christian, shall be subject to disciplinary action, after careful consideration by the Elders. Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 6:1-6,8
 - D. Attitude toward the local church – for treating the acts and decisions of the church with disregard, or pursuing such a course that produces discord, disunity or dissension.

Section 3: The Procedure of Discipline

The Elders are responsible to see that discipline is administered in true love, patience and understanding. In Matthew 18:15-17 the principles and steps are laid down.

- A. Exclusion – if the member in question neglects to hear the church (Matthew 18:17) and a Biblical solution cannot be worked out, the member will be dismissed from the membership of the church by a two-thirds vote of the members present at the meeting.
- B. Restoration – Excluded members may be restored to membership upon recommendation of the Elders, if there is satisfying evidence of genuine repentance. Restoration occurs by a two-thirds vote of members present at the meeting.

Article II

Officers

Officers of this church shall be Pastor, Elders, Deacons, Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Sunday School Superintendent, and Music Director. All officers of the church will be members of Grace Community Chapel in good standing. All officers of the church must be servant-leaders who follow Jesus Christ.

Following His example and the principle of Mark 10:43-45 and John 13:4-16; the officers must serve the Lord Jesus Christ and their fellow man.

All candidates for church office shall meet with the Elder's board prior to being presented for membership for election to office.

1. **Pastor**

The Pastor is an under-shepherd of Jesus Christ and an Elder of the Church. As a shepherd, he is to preach and teach the Word of God. "To be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." 2 Timothy 4:2. He is to administer the ordinances, namely: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He is to act as Moderator at business meetings. He or another Elder shall oversee all board and committee meetings. The Pastor shall be elected annually by a two-thirds vote of the members present. Either the Pastor or church may terminate the pastoral relationship, by giving a one-month notice of desire for change.

By mutual consent, however, the pastoral relationship may be terminated earlier. The Pastor shall strive to meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7. In case of a vacancy in the Pastoral office, the Pulpit Committee will prayerfully seek out and recommend a Pastoral Candidate. The church will consider one candidate at a time. The Pastoral Candidate must meet the following requirements before he is recommended to the church:

1. He has preached at least one Sunday service at the church.
2. He has met with the Pulpit Committee for in-depth questioning.
3. He has been provided with an opportunity for an open forum for questions to and from the Congregation.
4. All references and background specifics have been thoroughly checked by the Pulpit Committee.

2. Associate Pastor

The spiritual requirements are the same as those for the Pastor. It shall be the duty of the associate to assist the Pastor as requested and to fulfill all responsibilities and ministry obligations assigned to him by the Elders. He shall answer directly to the Pastor. The Associate Pastor shall be elected annually by a two-thirds vote of members present. Either the Associate Pastor or church may terminate the pastoral relationship, by giving a one-month notice of desire for change. By mutual consent, however, the pastoral relationship may be terminated earlier.

The Associate Pastor shall strive to meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7. In case of a vacancy, the Pulpit Committee will prayerfully seek out and recommend an Associate Pastoral Candidate. The church will consider one candidate at a time. The Associate Pastoral Candidate must meet the following requirements before he is recommended to the church:

1. He has preached at least one Sunday service at the church.
2. He has met with the Pulpit Committee for in-depth questioning.
3. He has been provided with an opportunity for an open forum for questions to and from the Congregation.
4. All references and background specifics have been thoroughly checked by the Pulpit Committee.

3. Elders

The Elders shall select a candidate for Elder from the membership. Upon approval, the candidate for Elder will be presented to the membership for election to office. The Elder shall be elected annually by a two-thirds vote of the members present. The Elders shall meet at least monthly. It shall be the responsibility of the Elders to oversee the ministry of the church. The Elders shall assist the Pastor in the Lord's Supper, Baptism and examining candidates for church membership. The Elders shall strive to meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5.

Upon resignation of the Pastor, the Elders shall immediately assume the responsibility of a Pulpit Committee. They shall add to the Pulpit Committee from the membership of Grace Community Chapel to become a minimum of a seven member committee.

A majority of the elders need to be present to have a Board Meeting. All votes will be unanimous.

4. **Deacons**

The Elders shall select a candidate for Deacon from the membership. Upon approval, the Deacon's Board will be informed of the Candidate prior to presentation to the membership for election to office. Deacons shall be elected annually by a two-thirds vote of the members present. It shall be the responsibility of the Board of Deacons to oversee the finances of the church, care for (i.e. all maintenance, repair and improvements), the physical building, grounds and property of Grace Community Chapel. The Deacons must receive prior approval from the church before making any structural changes. The Deacons shall be authorized to spend up to \$2,500.00 for any one item or occurrence. Any item or occurrence requiring over \$2,500.00 will be announced in the church bulletin for 2 consecutive weeks prior to the money being spent. In cases of an emergency nature where health and safety of individuals may be involved, the \$2,500.00 is waived.

Deacons shall strive to meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-7. The Board of Deacons working with the Treasurer shall prepare a financial report for the Annual Meeting. A copy of this report shall be presented to the membership one week prior to the Annual Meeting. The Deacons will meet at least monthly. A majority of the Deacons need to be present to have a Board Meeting. All votes will be unanimous.

5. **Clerk**

The clerk shall be elected for office annually by a two-thirds vote. The Clerk shall keep a record of all the proceedings of the business meetings. The Clerk shall keep a register of church members, of baptisms, and the deaths of members. The Clerk shall receive and issue letters of transfer of members and notify the Elders of the same. The Clerk shall present the minutes of the previous meeting at the next scheduled business meeting.

6. **Treasure/Assistant Treasurer**

The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer shall be elected for offices annually by a two-thirds vote. The Treasurer shall receive all monies contributed for the support of the church. The money shall be counted by two of the following: Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Elder or Deacon at the close of the service. This figure shall be reported to the membership through the bulletin or others means at the next Sunday service. The Treasurer shall keep a complete record of all receipts and disbursements and shall make payment of all bills as approved by the Deacons or the church membership. Payments shall be made by check only. The Treasurer shall prepare an annual financial report in cooperation with the Deacons to be made available to the membership one week prior to the Annual Meeting and it shall be presented at the Annual Meeting. In the temporary absence of the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer shall perform the responsibilities, which would normally fall to the Treasurer. The Treasurer shall prepare a month end financial report on the balance of all funds for presentation to the Secretary of the Deacon Board.

7. Sunday School Superintendent

The Sunday School Superintendent shall be elected to office annually by a two-thirds vote. The Sunday School Superintendent shall be responsible to the opening exercises of Sunday School, he or she shall oversee the teaching program, and special programs of the Sunday School Department. The Superintendent will ensure that all monies collected for Sunday School will be counted, recorded, and deposited. The Superintendent is encouraged to meet yearly with all of the teachers and more frequently should there be a need. If requested, the Superintendent shall maintain or cause to be maintained, attendance records for the Sunday School. The Superintendent will strive for teacher training and seek out qualified teachers as they are needed.

8. Music Director

The Elders shall select a candidate from the membership to fulfill the duties and requirements of this position. Upon approval of the Elders, the Deacon board will be informed of the candidate prior to the presentation to the membership for confirmation to the office. The Music Director shall be confirmed annually by the members with a two-thirds majority vote.

The candidate must be a member in good standing at Grace Community Chapel, being in full agreement with its statement of faith. The candidate shall have the appropriate education/experience relevant to the ministry's responsibilities. The candidate must have a sound knowledge of the scripture and the ability to apply scriptural principles in ministry. The candidate will be committed to developing a team approach to the music ministry of GCC.

The specific duties of the Music Director include, but are not limited to the following;

- Supporting the Elders in managing the weekly worship service by providing leadership surrounding the musical portions of the service.
- In participation with the Elders and Deacons, they will organize the music portions of any additional services.
- Administer the music ministry including, but not limited to: Scheduling musicians, Planning services with the use of '*Planning Center*' or a similar management tool, Ensuring volunteers for both sound & video systems if required, and Conducting rehearsals as needed.
- Oversee the sound and video technicians and the related equipment.
- Oversee the care of and management of all musical instruments owned by GCC.
- Develop and Manage the process to regularly identify and equip new volunteers in the church's music ministry.
- Administer the licenses of both '*CCLI*' and '*Planning Center*' or similar management tools, as required to continue to legally use published materials.
- Administer any funds provided to the music team and report appropriately to the Deacons any needs or expenditures.

The Music Director should be consulted for any guest musical performances, and use of musical or A/V equipment.

9. **Standard for Officers**

All elected officers of Grace Community Chapel must be members in good standing.
They must be in agreement with the Constitution and By-laws.

10. **Removal of Church Officers, Teachers, Leaders or Committee Members**

If anyone involved in the ministry shall conduct themselves in an inappropriate manner, by uncooperative attitude either in word or deed or does not seek for the edifying of the church, he or she may be removed from their position of ministry after a fair hearing with, and a unanimous decision by the Elders followed by a notice to the individual and a two-thirds vote of members present at a meeting called for that purpose.

The method followed is outlined in 1 Timothy 5:19-20. When the individual fails (unless excused) to attend three consecutive meetings which the office or position requires him or her to attend, such office or position shall be deemed vacant.

Article III

Section 1 – Business Meetings

All Church Officers are required to attend Business Meetings unless excused by the Elder's Board.

Business Meetings must be announced publicly via all channels of communication available at least two weeks in advance. At which time an agenda will be posted listing the purpose of the meeting.

All issues will be settled by a two-thirds vote of members at the meeting.

Before a topic can be discussed at a Business Meeting, there must be a motion that has been seconded. Once the discussion ends, the item is voted on.

Section 3 – Government: Jesus Christ is the Head of His Church.

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it (i.e. the membership).

All ministries created as part of Grace Community Chapel are accountable to the Elders of Grace Community Chapel, and will abide by the Constitution, and agree to be governed by it.

1. The leadership of any ministry needs to be approved by the Elders.
2. Prepared materials to be used by a ministry needs to be reviewed by the Elders.
3. Ministry meetings should not conflict with the regularly scheduled services of Grace Community Chapel.
4. Grace Christian Academy is a ministry of the church.

The Elders shall approve all guest speakers and/or musicians etc.

A watch care period of six months must pass before a person can serve in the ministry of Grace Community Chapel. Upon completion of this period, the individual will meet with the Elder's Board for approval. This period can be waived by the discretion of the Elder's Board.

We recognize the authority of this local church to ordain, license, or commission people for the ministry.

Article IV - Amendments

These regulations may be amended, supplemented or replaced by a two-thirds vote of the members present at a special meeting called for that purpose, where the nature of the proposed amendment has been presented to the church in writing two weeks prior to that meeting.

Article V – Borrowing

Grace Community Chapel shall be allowed to borrow money, at interest, from a financial institution or an individual.

Any monies borrowed must receive approval by a 2/3 vote of the members present at a special meeting called for that purpose.

Article VI – Dissolution

Upon dissolution of Grace Community Chapel, its remaining assets after all indebtedness has been paid, all property and interests shall be transferred to a Christian, tax-exempt, non-profit, non-government organization which will be specifically determined by the board of Elders and then approved by the members of the congregation.

Appendix 1

Covenant of Membership

1. Acknowledging my sin and guilt before God – I have received the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. John 1:12; Acts 16:31
2. I accept the Bible as the Inspired Word of God as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. 2 Peter 1:20-21
3. I have been baptized based upon my public confession of faith in obedience to the Lord’s command, publicly proclaiming my union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 6:3-6
4. I acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord of my life, and seek to confess Him before others by word and deed. Romans 10:9-10
5. I recognize my responsibility by tithes and offerings to further the gospel both at home and abroad. Malachi 3:8-10; 1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7
6. I recognize my responsibility to pray regularly for the ministry of this church, for the Pastor, Officers, and members that the witness of all concerned may be to the glory of God and to the salvation of souls. Ephesians 6:18-19; 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 25
7. I recognize my responsibility to be regular in my attendance at the services of the church. Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25
8. I realize my responsibility to discover, dedicate and use my Spiritual gift(s), abilities and talents to the glory of God through the local church. 1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:7, 12-16
9. I acknowledge the Church’s responsibility to administer discipline, as outlined in section 2 of the church constitution. Matthew 18:15-17; Titus 3:10

_____ I have read and understand and agree to abide by and follow Grace Community
(Initials) Chapel’s Statement of Faith as provided in its Constitution, and to be governed by it.

Having read and being in complete agreement with this covenant, recognizing the inability in myself to keep the terms of the covenant, I depend on the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the terms of this covenant.

(Signature)

(Date)

(Witness)

(Printed Name)