

# CONSTITUTION



GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH  
1320 Auburn Way South  
Auburn, WA 98002-6742  
(253) 833-5660

# GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

## CONSTITUTION

### PREAMBLE

We desire that our Constitution and Bylaws portray our intention to follow the guidelines of our Lord for the governing of His Church. They are designed to reflect our current comprehension of God's Word regarding the formation and functioning of this community of believers. These documents are open to evaluation and alteration in order to more accurately represent biblical desires and directives as well as to provide freedom to minister more effectively.

We, the corporate membership of Grace Community Church, thus constitute and organize ourselves in accordance with our understanding of New Testament principles and patterns of church life and leadership. We dedicate ourselves as a body of believers to the scriptural ideal that our worship, government and service shall *"prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:12-13).

The biblical texts quoted in this document are taken from the New International Version.

### ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this organization, a non-profit corporation, is Grace Community Church of Auburn, WA.

### ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

We believe the Church exists for the four-fold purpose of exaltation, edification, evangelism and extension.

#### **Exaltation – The Church Existing For Christ**

*Phil 2:8-11*

*"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."*

*Eph 1:22-23*

*I Cor 6:19*

*Col 2:8-10*

*I Pet 1:18-19*

The purpose of the Church begins with the recognition that we do not belong to ourselves, having been purchased by the death of Jesus Christ; and that He alone is Lord. Our first work is to humble ourselves in the presence of our Creator and Redeemer, and thus, internalize our faith before we externalize it. We must first have a right relationship with God before we can have a right relationship with others. We owe our entire allegiance to Christ who is the Head of the Church. We should seek in all things to follow His will as revealed in Scripture, and bring glory to His name.

## **Edification – The Church Existing For Itself**

*Eph 4:11-13*

*“It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”*

*II Tim 4:2-4  
Titus 2:1-3:2, 14  
Gal 6:1-2  
I Cor 12—14  
Rom 12:4-8  
Heb 10:24-25  
Heb 3:13  
Acts 2:42-47  
Acts 4:34-35  
Eph 4:16  
Josh 1:8*

One of the primary goals of the Church must be the life-transformation of each of its members. This requires two things: truth and love (relationship). Thus, we are committed to a strong program of Bible teaching and of training in discipleship and personal evangelism. Along with this, we are committed to establishing right relationships with one another at every point of love, care, concern, prayer, service and patience. The Body of Christ is composed of interdependent members, each having received from the Holy Spirit gifts which are to be exercised for the building up of the whole body and for the bearing of one another’s spiritual and temporal burdens. We desire to encourage the development and use of each other’s abilities, knowing that the whole body, as a harmonious structure knit together by that which every joint supplies, grows by the proper functioning of individual parts to its full maturity in love.

## **Evangelism – The Church Existing For Proclamation**

*Matt 28:18-20*

*“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

*Acts 1:8  
Col 4:3-6  
Mark 16:15  
Matt 9:35-37  
Rom 10:14-17  
Matt 22:37-39  
Eph 3:16-19  
Eph 4:13*

We accept this commission as a priority of the Church collectively and of each believer individually. It is our desire to share as widely and effectively as possible the Good News of God’s forgiveness in Christ. God equips and calls believers into a variety of vocations and ministries. Within that context each person is to be a witness by word and deed of the Lord Jesus Christ. God offers His love to all without distinction and is concerned that believers achieve their full potential in Christ. As we grow in our love for God and for one another, we become more human in the fullest sense of the term. In this way, we are best fitted to share with others what God is like (since we were created in His image) and what His love offers to people through His Son, Jesus Christ. So, the proclamation of the Gospel should be accompanied by genuine love and concern for all, and for the whole person.

## **Extension – The Church Existing For Preservation**

*Matt 25:34-36*

*“Then the King will say to those on his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by My Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited Me in; I needed clothes and you clothed Me; I was in prison and you came to visit Me.’ “*

*Matt 5:13-16*  
*Luke 3:10-14*  
*Luke 4:16-21*  
*Acts 4:35-35*  
*II Cor 10:4*  
*Gal 6:10*  
*James 2:14-26*  
*James 5:1-5*  
*I Jn 3:16-20*

In addition to the proclamation of the gospel, the Church has been commissioned by Christ to extend to the world His own ministry of compassion and of prophetic protest against evil. The Church can never settle for its own comfort in a world racked by problems such as moral decay, political corruption and oppression, violence and crime, and other social scourges that require solution and interventions informed by scriptural imperatives. Without manipulating political power to impose Christian standards on a secular and pluralistic society, the Church is commanded to act as a conscience to the world by demonstrating the love and righteousness of God in both word and sacrificial deed.

**\*NOTE:** Said organization is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

### **ARTICLE III. DOCTRINAL STATEMENT**

#### **Revelation**

*Matt 5:17-18*  
*Luke 24:27*  
*John 5:39*  
*John 10:35*  
*Acts 17:2-3*  
*Rom 15:4*  
*II Tim 3:16-17*  
*II Pet 1:21*

*Special:* We believe that “*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,*” by which we understand the whole Bible is inspired in the sense that men of God “*were moved by the Holy Spirit*” to write the very words of Scripture. We believe that this divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the writings--historical, poetical, doctrinal and prophetic. We believe that the whole Bible as originally written is therefore without error. We also believe that all the Scriptures were designed for our practical instruction.

*Rom 1:18-21*  
*Rom 2:14-15*  
*Acts 14:17*  
*Acts 17:27*  
*Ps 19:1-6*

*General:* We believe God makes Himself known to all humanity in general revelation (creation, providential care, the sense of His nearness, and conscience), and that much truth concerning God and life may be discovered through careful study of His creative handiwork.

#### **The Nature of God**

*Gen 1:1*  
*Deut 6:4*  
*John 4:24*  
*Matt 28:19-20*  
*II Cor 13:14*

We believe that there is one eternal and true God who exists in three persons--the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit--all having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, and worthy of precisely the same worship, trust and obedience. In the beginning, God created out of nothing the world and all the things therein, thus manifesting the glory of His power, wisdom and goodness. By His sovereign power He continues to sustain His creation. He reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures and human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing, all-wise, and all-present.

### **The Nature of Man**

*Gen 1:26-30*  
*Gen 3:1-24*  
*Ps 51:5*  
*Rom 3:10-12, 23*  
*Rom 5:12*

We believe that mankind, in the persons of Adam and Eve, was created in the image of God, without sin, and enjoyed unimpaired fellowship with the Lord; but, by voluntary transgression, man fell into sin, thus marring the image of God in human beings and condemning the race to eternal separation from God. Being alienated from God and having suffered the corruption of his nature, man is unable to please God.

### **The Person and Work of Jesus Christ**

*Matt 1:18-25*  
*John 1:1-3; 14*  
*John 17:7-14*  
*Acts 1:8-11*  
*Rom 3:21-31*  
*Rom 6:23*  
*II Cor 5:21*  
*Phil 2:5-8*  
*Col 1:15*  
*Heb 1:1-3*  
*I Pet 2:24-25*

We believe that God the Son, existing eternally and co-equally with the Father and Spirit, added to his divine nature a fully human nature and body by miraculous conception through the Holy Spirit and virgin birth. The Lord Jesus Christ perfectly revealed and accomplished the will of the Father, identifying Himself completely with mankind, yet without sin. He lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father and voluntarily atoned for the sins of all by dying on the cross as their substitute, thus satisfying divine justice and accomplishing salvation for all who trust in Him alone. He rose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He lived and died. He ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, where He, the only Mediator between God and man, continually makes intercession for His own. He shall come again to earth, personally and visibly, to consummate history and the eternal plan of God.

### **The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit**

*John 14:16-17*  
*John 16:8-11*  
*Acts 5:3-4*  
*Rom 8:9-11, 16-17*  
*I Cor 3:16-17*  
*I Cor 6:19-20*  
*I Cor 12:1-13*  
*Gal 5:22-23*  
*Eph 1:13-14; 5:18*  
*Titus 3:5-6*

We believe that the Holy Spirit is God, co-equal with the Father and the Son, and of the same attributes and nature. He inspired men of God to write the Scriptures, and enables believers through illumination, to understand the Bible. The Holy Spirit exalts Christ, convicts of sin, and calls people to Jesus Christ, the Savior. The Holy Spirit, upon regeneration, baptizes, indwells and seals the believer. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts and desires to fill and empower believers so they may effectively serve the cause of Christ. He cultivates Christian character and comforts believers in the process of restoring and renewing the image of God in them.

### **Salvation**

*Acts 16:30-31*  
*Rom 6:23; 8:29-39*  
*II Cor 5:17-21*  
*Eph 2:8-10*  
*Phil 1:6*  
*I Tim 2:5*  
*John 10:28*

We believe the only means of escape from the condemnation of sin is through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This offer of salvation is received on the basis of grace by all those who repent of their sins and believe in Him. When God has begun a saving work in the heart of any person, He gives assurance in His Word that He will continue performing it until the day of its full consummation.

### **The Christian Life**

*Rom 12:1-2*  
*Rom 14:1ff*  
*II Cor 3:18*  
*II Cor 7:1*  
*Eph 4:22-24*  
*Phil 2:12-13*

We believe that the essential accompaniment of a genuine saving relationship with Jesus Christ is a life of holiness and obedience, attained by believers as they submit to the Holy Spirit and the authority of God's Word, the Bible. The Holy Spirit guides and empowers believers in understanding and applying the Scriptures. His power and control are appropriated by faith, making it possible for the believer to lead a life of Christ-like character and to bear fruit to the glory of the Father. We

*James 2:14*

believe the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. This church recognizes that it cannot bind the conscience of individual members in areas where the Scriptures are silent. Rather, each believer is to be led in those areas by the Lord, to whom he or she alone is ultimately responsible.

*Matt 16:15-19*  
*Acts 2:41-42*  
*Acts 20:28*

### **The Church**

*Universal:* We believe the corollary of union with Jesus Christ is that all believers become members of His body, the Church. There is one true Church universal, comprised of all those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in the New Testament age.

*I Cor 12:12-28*  
*Eph 1:22-23*  
*Eph 2:19-22*  
*Phil 1:1*  
*I Tim 3:1-15*  
*Titus 1:5-9*

*Local:* The Scripture commands believers to gather together to devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, observance of baptism and communion as the ordinances established by Jesus Christ, fellowship, service to the body through the development and use of talents and gifts, and outreach to the world. Wherever God's people meet regularly in obedience to this command, there is the local expression of the Church. Under the watchcare of elders and other supportive leadership, its members are to work together in love and unity, intent on the one ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ. The local church is autonomous and free from all ecclesiastical and political interference.

*Matt 26:26-30*  
*Matt 28:19-20*  
*Mark 14:22-26*  
*Acts 2:41-42*  
*Acts 16:30-34*

### **Ordinances**

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience to God, symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried and risen Savior. Baptism pictures the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus.

*Rom 6:3-5*  
*I Cor 11:23-33*

We believe the Lord's Supper commemorates the death of Jesus Christ and anticipates His second coming. The Lord's Supper is for believers and participation in it should include careful self-evaluation.

*Col 1:16*  
*Job 38:7*  
*Heb 2:6-7*  
*II Pet 2:11*  
*Heb 1:4,14*  
*Ps 103:20*  
*Luke 1:13-20*  
*Rev 8:6-9:21*  
*Acts 5:19*

### **Angels**

We believe angels are spirit-beings created holy by God before the creation of the heavens and earth. They are temporarily superior to humans, but are inferior to Christ. They function in a dual capacity for God and man. They praise God's glory, communicate His message, execute His judgment and will accompany the Lord at His return. They minister to believers, providing both physical and spiritual needs.

*Mark 3:22-30*  
*Eph 6:11ff*  
*Jms 4:7*  
*Rev 20:10*

*Satan* is the chief wicked angel who fell through pride. Satan's character and power are revealed in his various titles: tempter, dragon, prince of this world, god of this age, accuser of the brethren, deceiver, enemy, father of lies, murderer, and evil one. However, through the "armor" provided in the gospel of Christ, the believer has victory over evil and may resist him. Satan's ultimate destiny, along with his demons, is destruction in hell.

*II Pet 2:4*  
*Jude 6*  
*Rev 16:13-16*  
*I Cor 6:19-20*

*Demons* are fallen angels. As Satan's subjects, they carry out his work in the world, engaging in all forms of temptations and deception, and most particularly, opposing God and the spiritual progress of His people. They may possess humans, but not believers, because believers belong exclusively to the Lord.

*Matt 16:17*  
*Matt 24:1-25:46*  
*Luke 17:20-37*  
*John 14:1-3*  
*I Cor 15:35-38*  
*II Cor 5:6-10*  
*I Thess 4:13-5:11*  
*Heb 9:27-28*  
*II Pet 3:1-18*  
*Rev 20:1-22:15*

### **The World to Come**

We believe that God will bring the present world to an end according to His sovereign will and purpose. Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly to the earth to set up His Kingdom. After His second coming, Christ will judge all people, determining the fate of each individual. For all mankind, there will be a resurrection of the body, some to everlasting torment in hell, others to everlasting joy in heaven. For unbelievers, God's judgment will reveal His justice in consigning them to perpetuate in eternal retribution their own rejection of God, and thus, their eternal separation from Him. Believers will be received into eternal communion with God and will be rewarded for works done in this life.

## **ARTICLE IV. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1. The Purpose of Membership**

*Acts 2:44-4*

*"All the believers were together and had everything in common...Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people."*

*Rom 16:1*  
*I Cor 1:2*  
*II Cor 8:1*

The New Testament presents a picture of definable groups of people who, once committed to the Lord, identified themselves with and committed themselves to a particular local body.

*Phil 1:1*  
*Acts 11:26*

In order to implement the principles of accountability and commitment to the local body of Christ, as defined the New Testament and practiced in the early churches, GCC recognizes the need for formal membership.

### **Section 2. The Criteria For Membership**

*I Cor 1:2*

*"To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours."*

*Acts 2:38*  
*Acts 2:41*  
*Matt 28:19-20*

GCC membership shall be open to anyone who has personally accepted Christ as Savior and Lord, who has been baptized as a believer, who desires to be an active participant of GCC, and who is committed to the Statement of Faith and Principles of Accountability of this church.

### Section 3. Principles of Accountability and Commitment to Membership

Membership in the Body of Christ requires submission to Christ--a desire to bring each phase of one's life under His Lordship. It involves obedience to the scriptural principles of commitment and accountability to the church, as summarized below:

#### Unity/Fellowship

*Eph 4:1-3*

*"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."*

*Phil 2:1-3*

*"...If there is any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."*

*Phil 2:27-30*

*I Cor 1:9*

*Ps 133*

*Rom 12:10*

*Gal 6:2*

*I Pet 3:8-9*

*Heb 3:13*

*Acts 2:42-47*

Being united with God in Christ, the Church is called to live and work in loving harmony. In this, we reflect the nature of the Triune God who has graciously and humbly provided the means for our salvation through the unique work of each Person in the Godhead. As members of the Body, we should continually seek to develop a spirit of mutual love, concern, encouragement, and the bearing of one another's burdens. We are to be concerned with each other's spiritual well-being, stimulating each other to a deeper walk and commitment to Christ. In the midst of our diversity as unique individuals, our desire is to maintain the unity (not uniformity) taught in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*Acts 4:32-35*

*I John 1:7*

*Gal 6:1*

*Luke 17:3-4*

*Eph 4:29-32*

Realizing that sin obstructs one's walk with the Lord and impedes fellowship, we are commanded to gently confront brothers and sisters in love according to the biblical principles when there is evidence of sin, thus preserving the integrity of the body, the spirit of peace and the bond on unity. (See "Biblical Procedures for Church Discipline" - Bylaws, Article I, Section 5.)

#### Holiness

*II Cor 7:1*

*"Since we have these promises (God's provision in Christ) dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."*

*Rom 6:3-14*

*Rom 12:1-2*

*Eph 4:20-24*

*I Pet 1:13-21*

The grace of God in the gospel of Christ calls believers to a radical change in behavior. Being delivered from the penalty and power of sin, we are to live in a manner that is consistent with our new relationship with God, who is holy.

#### Time

*Heb 10:24-25*

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

Matt 6:33  
Phil 2:5-7  
II Cor 5:15  
Rom 14:7-8

Regular fellowship with other believers is vital to one's own Christian walk. Therefore, believers should be willing to adjust their schedules to give priority to meeting with the body in regular corporate assemblies. Further, because Christ expended Himself on our behalf, we should be willing to give of our time to build His Kingdom and pursue those things of eternal significance.

### **Gifts and Abilities**

Rom 12:4-6

*"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us...let each use it in proportion to his faith."*

I Cor 12  
I Cor 14  
Eph 4:11-13  
Matt 25:14-30

We recognize that the Body of Christ is composed of interdependent members, each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body. Therefore, each believer should seek to identify, develop and utilize his/her spiritual gifts and abilities and to seek a place of service within the body, with the support and affirmation of the body.

### **Treasures**

Matt 6:19-21

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Luke 6:38  
Heb 9:11-14  
Phil 3:7-8  
Matt 6:33  
Matt 13:44  
I Pet 1:17-19

Realizing that we have been bought with the price of Christ's blood, everything we are and have belongs to Him, and His Kingdom should become the true treasure we pursue.

Matt 23:23  
Matt 3:8-10  
II Cor 8-9  
Prov 3:9-10  
Luke 21:1-4

We recognize the tithe as a biblical guideline for regular support of the body. Moreover, in response to Christ's abundant giving, we should increasingly seek to submit our personal resources to His Lordship, displaying a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness, knowing that as we give, our lives will be *"made rich in every way so we can be generous on every occasion."*

Titus 3:5  
Eph 2:8-9  
Rom 4:5

NOTE: The above scriptural principles of commitment to the Lord and to the body in no way represent the pathway to salvation. Salvation is wholly a work of God's free grace, not the result in whole or part of any human works or goodness. However, the inevitable accompaniment of a genuine saving relationship with Jesus Christ is the desire to grow in obedience and godliness, brought about by the Holy Spirit's working in one's life.

## **ARTICLE V. COVENANT**

We do covenant together by God's grace to live our lives consistent with the standards of biblical teaching; to know and be like Jesus Christ; to reflect in all our relationships the servant love of our Lord; to support this local church in attendance, prayer, service and giving; and to share the message of Christ with the world.

## ARTICLE VI. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

### Section 1. Autonomy

This church shall be self-governing in all matters, and shall be free from any ecclesiastical or political interference.

### Section 2. Authority

#### Who Is The Head Of The Church?

*Col 1:18*

*“And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning, and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.”*

*Eph 1:22-23*

Christ is the head of the Church. He is the true source of all the Church is and does, and His glory is to be the objective of every act, function and motive of the body, both individually and corporately.

#### Where Does The Church Receive Its Guidance?

*II Tim 3:16-17*

*“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

*II Tim 2:15*

*Matt 22:37-39*

*Ps 119*

God has provided His thoughts and His direction for the Body in His Word. The Bible reflects and contains His commands, His counsel and His purpose for the church and for every believer.

#### What Is The Source Of The Church’s Power?

*Acts 1:8*

*“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”*

*Rom 8:10-11*

*Eph 1:13*

*Eph 5:18*

*Gal 5:16*

The Holy Spirit is the source of the Church’s power. The Holy Spirit’s role is to indwell and control believers in order to conform them to the character of Christ.

#### How Is The Church Led?

*I Peter 2:9*

*“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”*

*Acts 15*

In light of the priestly status of every believer, the authority of the local church, under the headship of Christ, properly resided in its membership. Even under the Apostles, the congregation was apprised of the issues when a major decision was made concerning faith and practice by the leadership. However, the oversight and guidance of the local church was effected by duly appointed elders from the membership, who carried out their leadership through careful sensitivity to the needs of the congregation and the revealed will of God.

*Titus 1:5*

*“For this reason I left you in Crete that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.”*

*Acts 20:28* “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood.”

*Eph 4:11-13*  
*Rom 15:20*  
*1 Tim 3:1-7*  
*Acts 14:23*  
*Titus 1:5-9*  
*1 Tim 5:17*  
*1 Pet 5:1-4*  
*Acts 20:28-32*

God’s plan for leadership is revealed in the Bible. He launched the Church by giving it individuals who served as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These believers, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, brought local churches into existence through their teaching and preaching. As churches were established in the faith, and when more than one person became qualified, elders were appointed to continue the ministry of shepherding and teaching the local church. To the elders was given the ultimate responsibility for the oversight of that particular church body, and the shepherding of its members.

*Acts 6:2-3* “So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them...’ “

*Acts 6:1-7* As necessary, deacons were also appointed to serve the church, particularly in undertaking those areas of need that would otherwise prohibit the elders and other spiritual leadership from performing their biblical responsibilities.

*Heb 13:17* “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

*1 Cor 16:16*  
*1 Thess 5:12-13*

There is spiritual equality between elders, deacons, and all members of the body. However, for the purpose of order, Scripture indicates that elders, as overseers, are corporately entrusted with special authority to govern the local church. In response to the biblical pattern of leadership, members of the body are taught in Scripture to lovingly support their leaders and submit to their leadership.

### **Section 3. Elders**

#### **Their Biblical Roles**

*Acts 20:28-31*  
*1 Pet 5:1-3*

a. Shepherd the Flock:  
Serving in all humility, elders are to guide, direct, guard and protect the members of the body, seeking to meet their needs and assist in any way possible, warning against harmful influences and guarding against false teachers.

*1 Pet 5:3*

b. Lead Through Example:  
Elders are to provide a scriptural role model and are to set a pattern before the flock of a rightly ordered life—with a single purpose, to glorify God.

*1 Tim 3:2*  
*Titus 1:9*

c. Teach and Exhort:  
Elders are to lead through insightful and accurate biblical instruction and admonition.

Acts 20:29-31  
Titus 1:9

d. Refute Those Who Contradict Truth:

Elders are to confront those who are teaching what they should not teach or who are continuing in a pattern of behavior contradictory to biblical truth. Thus, elders are to keep closing potential entrances for Satan so that the truth of Christ will remain credible to both the congregation and the community.

I Tim 3:5  
I Tim 5:17

e. Manage the Church of God:

Elders are to oversee the life of the church with the assistance of other godly leaders. They must be people who can “rule well.”

James 5:14

f. Pray for the Sick:

Elders are to pray for the spiritual and physical well-being of members of the congregation.

**Their Biblical Qualifications**

I Tim 3:2-7

*“Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect...He must not be a recent convert,...He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”*

Titus 1:6-9

*“An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”*

1. *Above Reproach:* Elders must be blameless, presenting no patterns of scriptural disobedience or grounds for accusation.
2. *Husband of One Wife:* Elders, if married, must be devoted husbands.
3. *Temperate:* Elders must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.
4. *Prudent:* Elders must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgment, not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.
5. *Respectable:* Elders must demonstrate a well-ordered life and good behavior.
6. *Hospitable:* Elders must be unselfish with their personal resources. They must be willing to share blessings with others, especially in their homes.
7. *Able to Teach:* Elders must be able and willing to communicate the truth of God and exhort sound doctrine in a non-argumentative way.
8. *Not Addicted to Wine:* Elders must be free from addictions, and must be willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.

9. *Not Pugnacious:* Elders must be gentle and characterized by forbearance and tenderness.
10. *Uncontentious:* Elders must not be given to quarreling or selfish argumentation.
11. *Free From the Love of Money:* Elders must not be stingy, greedy or out for sordid gain. They should not be preoccupied with amassing material things, but rather should be a model of giving.
12. *Manage Own Household:* Elders must have a well-ordered household, a healthy family life, and well-behaved children (pertains to those children still under the authority of the parents).
13. *Not a New Convert:* Elders must not be new believers. They must have been Christians long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and the depth of their spirituality.
14. *A Good Reputation With Outsiders:* Elders must be well respected by unbelievers, and must be free from hypocrisy.
15. *Not Self-Willed:* Elders must not be stubborn, insensitive or prone to force opinions on others. They must be more interested in service than self-pleasure.
16. *Not Quick-Tempered:* Elders must be able to exercise self-control and patience in difficult situations.
17. *Love What Is Good:* Elders must desire the will of God in every decision.
18. *Just:* Elders must be fair and impartial. Their judgments must be based on scriptural principle.
19. *Devout:* Elders must be reverent, continually desiring to be separated from sin. They must be devoted to prayer, the study of Scripture and the guarding of their own spiritual walk.
20. *Holding Fast the Faithful Word:* Elders must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

#### **Section 4. Deacons and Deaconesses**

##### **Their Biblical Role**

*Acts 6:1-7*

Deacons and deaconesses serve under the direction of the Elders, undertaking those areas of service necessary for the church's functioning that would otherwise prohibit the Elders and other spiritual leaders, lay or staff (See Bylaws, Article III for explanation of these leadership roles), from performing their biblical responsibilities. No specific, on-going function of a deacon(ess) is mentioned in Scripture, probably because service needs change, and so the role of deacons and deaconesses should be flexible. This is why qualifications for deacons and deaconesses are stressed rather than specific tasks.

##### **Their Biblical Qualifications**

*I Tim 3:8-12*

*"Deacons likewise must be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested, and then if there is*

*nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, deaconesses\* are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.”*

\*NOTE: The Greek word, gunaikos, may be understood as “women” or “wives.” It seems most consistent with the context of this passage to understand Paul’s use of this word to refer to the female counterpart of a deacon, thus the translation “deaconess.” Romans 16:1 provides an example of a woman (Phoebe) who carried the distinction of being called a deacon in the church (“servant” = diakonos or deacon).

1. *Individuals of Dignity:* Deacons must be mature, of sound mind and character, yielded to the Holy Spirit.
2. *Not Double-Tongued:* Deacons must demonstrate verbal consistency. They must not be prone to saying one thing to one person and something else to another.
3. *Not Addicted to Wine:* Deacons must be free from addictions, and must be willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
4. *Not Fond of Sordid Gain:* Deacons must be purely motivated in their service.
5. *Holding to the Mystery of Faith With a Clear Conscience:* Deacons must have a sound knowledge of Christian truths and a lifestyle in accord with them. They must not be easily swayed from the truth.
6. *Beyond Reproach:* Deacons must display a lifestyle free from on-going patterns of scriptural disobedience.
7. *First Tested:* Deacons must have proven over time that they are faithful and that their walk is credible.
8. *Women Must Likewise...:* Female deacons (deaconesses) are to possess the same qualities of spiritual maturity as the men.
9. *The Husband of One Wife:* Deacons, if married, must be devoted spouses.
10. *Manage Household Well:* Deacons must have well-ordered households, a healthy family life, and well-behaved children (pertains to those children still under the authority of the parents.)

## **Section 5. Corporate Board**

The Board of Elders and Church Treasurer shall serve as the corporate Board as outlined in the Bylaws.

## **Section 6. Association**

This church shall be affiliated with the Conservative Baptist Association of America and its regional organization, the Northwest CBA.

## ARTICLE VII. MINISTRY

### Section 1. Philosophy of Ministry

We believe that the individual members of this church form a corporate body of priests who have the privilege and responsibility of offering prayer and spiritual sacrifices to God (I Pet 2:9; Rom 12:1,2; Heb 13:15,16). It is the duty of the leadership to equip and encourage the development of each member's unique gifts and qualities so they may effectively minister in the church and in the world (Eph 4:11-16). For this reason, the ministries of this church shall be dynamically shaped around the gifts and special needs of its members and the needs of our community in these times of rapid change and growth.

### Section 2. Teaching and Leading

Even though the beliefs and practices of this church are open to evaluation and modification, anyone leading or teaching in any capacity must do so in conformity with the Constitution, Bylaws, Church Operations Manual (see Bylaws, Article X.) and Elders' Position Statement (See Bylaws, Article II, Section 1. d. - Function). If a question arises concerning a particular belief or practice, the matter should be brought before the Elders for their consideration in view of God's Word and general revelation. In this way, we hope to encourage openness to learning and new understanding of truth without confusion or division.

### Section 3. Mission

*Matt 28:18-20*

*Acts 1:8*

*Rev 7:9*

Our church has been called of God to make disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the world. This is our greatest responsibility and highest privilege. To accomplish this mission, the thrust of our ministry activities (worship, preaching, teaching, fellowship, local and cross-cultural outreach, etc.) and ministry resources (time, talent and treasures) focuses on motivating, training, and deploying people toward *being and making* disciples "*in every nation, tribe, people and language.*"

On a local level, our mission to make disciples finds its focus in reaching the greater Southeast Puget Sound area—one of the least churching regions in the United States—with the gospel of Jesus Christ by providing or reproducing (in new and existing churches) excellence in ministries of:

- 1) preaching and teaching
- 2) worship and the arts
- 3) meeting needs and building relationships
- 4) training and mobilizing the laity
- 5) developing leaders

### Section 4. Earnings

No part of the net earnings of the organization shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the organization shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in the purpose clause hereof.

### Section 5. Activities

No substantial part of the activities of the organization shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the organization shall not participate in, or

intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this document, the organization shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

#### **ARTICLE VIII. AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended by a seventy-five (75) percent majority vote of the voting members present at any regular or special meeting, provided the proposed amendment(s) has been explained to the congregation and an exact copy of the proposed change and a notice of the date, time and place of the meeting are announced to the church at least ninety (90) days in advance.

Without altering the meaning or significance of the content of this Constitution, minor changes in wording for the purpose of clarification, simplification, correction of typos, etc. may be approved collectively by a 75% affirmative vote of the Elders, Resource Advisory Team, and Management Team.

#### **ARTICLE IX. DISSOLUTION**

Upon the dissolution of the organization, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All property, real or personal, owned by this corporation shall be, and hereby is, irrevocably dedicated to evangelical purposes determined by the general Conservative Baptist Association. Any liquidation, dissolution or abandonment of the corporation will not inure to the benefit of any individual(s).