

**[Changes to the constitution and bylaws proposed by the elders in October 2019 to more accurately reflect the structure of our multi-site church, our elder-led church model, and changes in the EFCA statement of faith. Omissions are presented in ~~strike through~~ and additions or changes highlighted in green.]**

## **THE CONSTITUTION OF GRACE FELLOWSHIP EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH**

### **PREAMBLE**

We, the members of the GRACE FELLOWSHIP EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH, in order to carry out efficiently the commission given by Jesus Christ to His Church, do ordain and establish the following Constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves;

### **ARTICLE I – NAME**

The name of this organization shall be "GRACE FELLOWSHIP EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH" hereinafter called the Church.

### **ARTICLE II - AFFILIATION**

This Church shall be affiliated with the Great Lakes District of the Evangelical Free Church of America. In the event that the Church desires to withdraw its affiliation from the Great Lakes District of the Evangelical Free Church of America this can be accomplished by an affirmative vote equal to the same majority required to amend the Constitution.

### **ARTICLE III - MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of this Church is to:

- Gathering together to worship God.
- Growing together in grace to be more like Christ.
- Going together with the Gospel to the Tri-State and world.

### **ARTICLE IV - STATEMENT OF FAITH**

#### **We Believe:**

#### **God**

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

#### **The Bible**

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by

which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

### **The Human Condition**

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

### **Jesus Christ**

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus-Israel's promised Messiah-was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

### **The Work of Christ**

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

### **The Holy Spirit**

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

### **The Church**

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

### **Christian Living**

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

### **Christ's Return**

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

### **Response and Eternal Destiny**

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

Our Statement of Faith does not exhaustively address the extent of our beliefs. The Bible is our final authority. Should questions of interpretation and/or application arise, the Elders of Grace Fellowship Church are the final interpretative authority on the Bible's meaning and application for Grace Fellowship Church.

#### ARTICLE V – MEMBERSHIP

Membership of this Church shall be composed of those individuals who, through saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been born again. They should manifest the fruit of a true Christian in lifestyle. They will subscribe to the aforementioned ~~Doctrinal Statement of Faith,~~ and the Church Constitution ~~and By-Laws and understand the Doctrinal Positions of the Church~~ with an allowable exception pertaining to the timing of the personal, bodily return of Christ. Members will support the Church by prayers, serving, ~~financial~~ contributions, and attendance.

#### ARTICLE VI – PROPERTY

A. This Church shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Kentucky and as is deemed necessary for the business of the Church, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed or otherwise. All such property shall be in the name of the Church.  
B. In case of division of the Church (from which we pray God by His mercy to preserve us), the property of the Church shall belong to those members who abide by the Constitution and By-Laws of GRACE FELLOWSHIP EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH.  
C. In the case of dissolution of Grace Fellowship Evangelical Free Church, the property shall be assigned to the Great Lakes District Conference of the Evangelical Free Church to enable said conference to renew the work or use the values thereof for further Gospel enterprises. The Church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by the congregation of Grace Fellowship, or when the Church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than six members remain.

#### ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution must be available to the members by the elders in written or electronic format and adopted as a preliminary step at a regular business meeting of the Church. At the succeeding meeting, they can be acted upon for final adoption, but must receive the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership present and voting.

#### ARTICLE VIII – CHURCH POLITY

Grace Fellowship Evangelical Free Church shall operate under the biblical model of an elder-led Church with the support and consent of the members of the congregation as outlined in the By-Laws. The Church is one body under the authority of the elders and participating at various campus locations. Matters impacting the entire Church shall be considered before the whole Church congregation, while matters impacting individual campuses shall be considered before the campus congregation.

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This Constitution was officially adopted by the congregation of the GRACE FELLOWSHIP EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH of Union, Kentucky on ~~December 11, 2016.~~ [To be amended upon approval.]

Adopted 07/16/2017

Brad Bigney Lead Pastor

Brian Fannin, Peter LaRuffa, Todd Richmond Staff Leadership Team

# THE BY-LAWS OF GRACE FELLOWSHIP EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

## ARTICLE I – MEMBERSHIP

### Section 1: Qualifications

#### Individuals:

- Who confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
- Who have assurance of salvation
- Whose character, conduct and reputation is in accord with the confession of faith
- Who accept the Constitution and By-Laws of this congregation hereafter referred to as the Church.
- Who are 18 years of age

### Section 2: Classification

- A. Only active members will be counted in making up a quorum for conducting Church business.
- B. All membership rolls shall be reviewed by the elders at least once a year. Those members who do not show their support by prayers, serving, financial contributions, and attendance and financial support may be removed from placed on the inactive membership list with the full concurrence of the elders. Inactive members will not retain voting rights.

### Section 3: Admission

- A. Application for membership to the Church shall be made to the elders. Applicants shall be given a copy of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Church.
- B. All applicants shall be asked to acquaint themselves with the Statement of Faith of the Church, the history of the Church and its doctrines and the Evangelical Free Church of America.
- C. Applicants shall supply with the elders with written personal testimony of their salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and evidence of their understanding of and agreement with the Statement of Faith, the Constitution and By-Laws of the Church.
- D. All satisfactory candidates shall be recommended by the elders to the Church or campus congregation for consideration and feedback at any business meeting for approval and admission.
- E. If any member has a valid reason for objecting to the receiving of any applicant into the Church, they shall communicate the concerns to immediately appear before the elders and give scriptural reasons for their objections.
- F. Satisfactory candidates shall be accepted into membership by the elders and acknowledged by communication to the Church or campus, elected to membership by a three-fourths vote of the members present.

### Section 4: Conduct

- A. All members and regular attendees are encouraged to remember each other in prayer (Ephesians 6:18), to aid each other in sickness and distress (James 5:15-16), and to be courteous in speech (Colossians 4:6) and slow to anger (Ephesians 4:29-32).
- B. All members and regular attendees are encouraged to support the Church through financial contributions tithes and offerings according to the principles laid down in 1 Corinthians 16:2; Malachi 3:10 and 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.
- C. All members and regular attendees are called upon to heed the scriptural admonition: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove

what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1). Be an "example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12), and to abstain from any act or practice which may be harmful in its influence or a stumbling block to the weak (Romans 14:13-21).

#### Section 5: Absence

Any person, absent for more than a **one** year and from whom communication has been requested by the elders and not received may be **removed from the** ~~dropped from the active membership roll by~~ **unanimous vote of the elders** ~~a two-thirds vote of active members present and voting at a regular business meeting.~~

#### Section 6: Discipline

A. If any member **or regular attendee** shall conduct themselves in a manner which in the studied opinion of the elders is not in harmony with scriptural principles and for which they do not show repentance, then the said individual shall be interviewed and counseled by the elders as indicated in the Word of God (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1). The **repentance and** restoration of the erring member shall be the single purpose and love the sole motivating force of these interviews.

B. If, however, the member should choose to continue in their unrepentant condition, their membership shall be **terminated by a unanimous vote of the elders**, ~~recommended for termination to the congregation by a two-thirds vote of the elders. A simple majority vote by the congregation is needed for termination of membership.~~ If membership is terminated in this manner, the unrepentant individual may **attend regular worship services but may** not partake in the Lord's Supper when celebrated by ~~Grace Fellowship Evangelical Free the~~ Church nor will the said individual be able to participate in activities sponsored by ~~Grace Fellowship Evangelical Free the~~ Church. **Other sanctions may be applied at the discretion of the elders for the protection of the body.**

C. If, **however**, a regular attendee should continue in their unrepentant condition, then the elders will inform the said individual that they **may attend regular worship services but may** ~~can~~ no longer partake of the Lord's Supper when celebrated by ~~Grace Fellowship Evangelical Free the~~ Church nor will the said individual be able to participate in activities sponsored by ~~Grace Fellowship Evangelical Free the~~ Church. **Other sanctions may be applied at the discretion of the elders for the protection of the body.**

**D. Removal of a member or regular attendee shall be communicated to the Church or campus as appropriate either at a meeting or through written or electronic format.**

#### Section 7: Property Rights

A. The private property of the individual members of this Church shall be exempt from corporate debt.

B. Any member who has withdrawn or whose membership has been terminated loses all rights of the Church and shall have no claim upon any part of the Church properties.

## ARTICLE II – MEETINGS

#### Section 1: Public Services

Worship services, Sunday School services and other Gospel services shall be conducted at such times as is decided by the elders.

#### Section 2: ~~Regular~~ Business Meetings

~~Regular business~~ **Business** meetings of the Church (consisting of all campuses) shall be held as necessary. An annual meeting **of the Church** shall be held each year at which the annual budget will be presented to the Church for approval. All business meetings shall be announced at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

### Section 3: ~~Special Business Meetings~~

~~Special business meetings may be called by the elders. Notice of such special meeting shall be given at least two weeks previous to the date of the meeting.~~

### Section **3**: Business Meeting Moderation and Order

An Elder shall conduct the annual meeting (the moderator) and other business meetings. He shall ensure the meeting is conducted in a way that is orderly and pleasing to God (cf. **1 Corinthians** 14:40; **2 Corinthians** 5:9,10; **1 Thessalonians** 4:1), in accordance with the biblical principles of communication found in Ephesians 4:15,16, 25ff, **Colossians** 3:8,12,13; 4:6; **Proverbs** 18:13,15,17 et al. All decisions made by the moderator conducting the meeting regarding procedural issues during the meeting shall be final.

### Section **4**: Quorum

**For a meeting of the Church**, fifty percent (50%) of the elders and a minimum of fifty members present and voting shall constitute the required quorum for the transaction of business unless otherwise indicated in the Constitution.

### Section **5**: Voting

A. All members ~~eighteen years or older~~ shall have the right to vote in all matters coming before the **Church** congregation.

B. All matters coming before the **Church** congregation shall be determined by a simple majority vote except when otherwise specified in the By-Laws.

### Section **6**: Eligibility of Candidates for Office

All officers and board members except salaried officers must be chosen from among the ~~active~~ members of the Church in good standing.

## ARTICLE III – PASTORS

### Section 1: Qualifications

A pastor of the Church must be of irreproachable Christian character having a good report and a consistent devotional life (**1** Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:1-9).

### Section 2: Call

A pastor shall be called for an indefinite term of office by a three-fourths majority vote of the members present at any regular or special business meeting of the Church. The membership of the pastor and his wife will be transferred automatically to the current membership role of the Church.

### Section 3: Duties of a Pastor

It shall be the duty of a pastor:

- A. To give himself to the teaching of God's Word and to prayer.
- B. To be an example to the believers in his personal, family and public life.
- C. To lead the congregation in worship and prayer, the study of the Word of God, administering the ordinances, watching over the spiritual care of the congregation, planning and facilitating of ministries and mission, visiting the sick and earnestly seeking the salvation of the lost.
- D. To teach the congregation the doctrines of the Word of God, biblical principles for Christian living and how to develop spiritual gifts and to function effectively as members within the body of Christ.

#### Section 4: Pastoral Discipline

A. Discipline of a pastor shall be considered by the elders on the testimony of two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19). If he teaches anything contrary to the Scriptures, lives an unrighteous life unbecoming to the Gospel or does not perform his duties then he shall be admonished by the elders of the Church.

B. If the elders determine that it is necessary to dismiss the pastor, this shall be accomplished by a consensus of the elders. ~~If a pastor is dismissed he may be given up to sixty days compensation effective the day of his termination.~~

#### Section 5: Pastoral Vacancy

The elders will be responsible for inviting guest speakers or filling the pulpit for services when necessary.

### ARTICLE IV - CHURCH OFFICERS

Church Officers shall be members in good standing of the Church.

#### Section 1: Elders

Elders shall be elected by the Church and in any case there shall be no less than seven. Elders are to serve for a term of three years, their terms being so arranged so that **approximately** one-third of their number shall be elected each year. The Elders shall promote the spiritual welfare of the members of the Church. They shall have the responsibility for ministries and financial stewardship. They shall meet the biblical qualifications found in 1 Timothy and Titus.

#### Section 2: Deacons

~~Deacons shall be nominated by the elders and be elected by the congregation. There shall be no less than three deacons. Deacons are to serve a term of three years with one third to be considered for rotation each year. They~~ **Deacons** shall **be appointed** to serve the Church **or campus at** per the Elders' request. They shall meet the biblical qualifications **s** found in 1 Timothy.

#### Section 3: Secretary

The Secretary **or appointed person** shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings and decisions at all business meetings of the Church. ~~Such records are to be approved at the next business meeting.~~ The Secretary shall preserve in a safe place all Church records. The Secretary shall give legal notice of all meetings if/when such notice is required.

#### Section 4: Treasurer



The treasurer shall generate a financial report for reporting to the Church at all regular business meetings and at such other times as may be requested by the Church or elders.

## ARTICLE V – ELDER BOARDS

### Section 1: Board of Elders

Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, any area not specifically assigned to the congregation falls under the oversight and direction of the Elders. The Elders shall elect their own offices, one of which shall serve as Secretary at Church-Business Meetings, and shall appoint the Treasurer. They shall meet regularly. They shall be responsible for the spiritual welfare of the Church and carry out the responsibilities as prescribed in the By-Laws. They shall concern themselves with the biblical mandates that have to do both with the body of the Church and welfare of the community. ~~They shall set goals and strategy to better accomplish the mission of the local Church in the community.~~

### Section 2: Deacons

~~The Deacons shall meet as needed and at the request of the Executive or Senior Pastor or a majority of the Elders. They shall elect their own offices. They shall carry out the responsibilities as prescribed in the By-Laws.~~

## ARTICLE VI – COMMITTEES AND STAFF

~~Committees and staff~~ Staff deemed necessary to fulfill the mission of the Church shall be approved by the Elders ~~or staff pastors as appropriate.~~

## ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS

These By-Laws may be amended or altered by a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at any regular or special business meeting of the Church, provided notification of the proposed alteration or amendment has been made available in written writing or electronic format to the members of the congregation at the previous business meeting of the Church.

## ARTICLE VIII – INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

The Constitution of Grace Fellowship Church is hereby incorporated by reference into these By-Laws.

## ARTICLE IX – STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE & SEXUALITY

- We believe that the term “marriage” has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture.
- We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other.
- We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage between a man and a woman

- We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagree with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.
- We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the Church as the local Body of Christ, and to prove a biblical role model to the Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the Church in any capacity, or serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage & Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.
- We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.
- We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. 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 the Church.