

**The Constitution of**  
**GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**Christchurch**  
**New Zealand**

**Article I - Name**

The name of the church shall be "*Grace Baptist Church*".

**Article II - Purpose**

The purpose of this church is to glorify God by promoting true worship, evangelising unbelievers, and edifying Christians. Therefore we are committed to proclaiming God's perfect Law and the glorious Gospel of His grace through all the world, and "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

**Article III - Articles of Faith**

The ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order and morals is, and must be, the Bible alone.

As a church we subscribe to the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, believing it to be an adequate expression of the biblical doctrine we wish to express (with the exception of Chapter 10 Paragraph 3 and the second half of Chapter 26 Paragraph 4).

**Article IV - Church Officers and Members**

The church shall have a definite membership and shall recognise the continuing New Testament offices of Elders (including Pastors) and Deacons.

**A - Elders**

From time to time Elders shall be appointed to lead the church in humility as under-shepherds of Jesus Christ, with recognised authority to teach, counsel, discipline and care for the members (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-12; I Thessalonians 5:12-13; I Peter 5:1-4). Elders shall be men who meet the following criteria:

- i. Men who meet the requirements for membership detailed in 'D' below; Elders will normally be appointed from within the church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).
- ii. Men who fulfill the biblical qualifications for Elders as outlined in I Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

- iii. Men who have a heart-felt desire to serve the Lord in this office whilst recognising the responsibility it entails (I Timothy 3:1; James 3:1).
- iv. Men who agree unreservedly with the Articles of Faith.
- v. Men who have been privately interviewed by the Elders and recommended to the church.
- vi. If no biblical objections are received privately by the Elders from members by a given date arrangements shall be made to publicly set apart those men recommended to the Eldership at a worship service of the church (Acts 13:1-3; Galatians 2:9).

### **B - Pastors**

A Pastor or Pastors shall be appointed as necessary. The Pastor shall be an Elder but may be distinguished in the following ways:

- i. He shall be a man gifted to preach the Gospel and having an inward call and burden which cannot be satisfied apart from this ministry (I Corinthians 9:16).
- ii. He shall be a man who's gifts for preaching and teaching, and who's call to Gospel work are recognised by the church who shall set him apart for this ministry and, where possible, shall undertake to support him materially so that he might better employ his time and gifts for the good of the church (Acts 13:1-3; I Corinthians 9:3-11; Galatians 6:6; Ephesians 4:11; I Timothy 4:12-16, 5:17-18).

### **C - Deacons**

From time to time Deacons shall be appointed to take responsibility for the material needs of the church so that Elders are able to give their attention to its spiritual care (Acts 6:1-7). Deacons shall be those who meet the following criteria:

- i. Those who meet the requirements for membership detailed in 'D' below.
- ii. Those who fulfill the biblical qualifications for Deacons as outlined in I Timothy 3:8-13.
- iii. Those who have been privately interviewed by the Elders and recommended to the church.
- iv. If no biblical objections are received privately by the Elders from members by a given date arrangements shall be made to publicly recognise those recommended to the Deaconate at a worship service of the church.

### **D - Members**

All persons who meet the following criteria shall be regarded as members of Grace Baptist Church and the Elders shall keep a record of their names:

- i. Those who have testified publicly of their repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and whose conduct is consistent with this testimony (I Thessalonians 2:12; I Timothy 6:12; Titus 2:11-14; I Peter 3:15).
- ii. Those who have been baptised as believers in accordance with the Scriptures (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 8:12).

- iii. Those who as regularly as possible attend Sunday worship and other meetings of this church (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25).
- iv. Those who, while perhaps not having a clear understanding of the Articles of Faith, are nevertheless not opposed to them (Psalm 133:1; Philippians 1:27-28).
- v. Those who are not members of another church (except in special circumstances, e.g. students).
- vi. Those who have been privately interviewed by the Elders and recommended to the church.
- vii. If no biblical objections are received privately by the Elders from members by a given date arrangements shall be made to publicly accept into membership, at a worship service of the church, those recommended by the Elders (Acts 2:40-47).

In the event that a person ceases to uphold, in life or word, the qualifications for officers or criteria for members outlined above, the church shall follow appropriate biblical procedures to ensure its continuing faithfulness to God and His Word (Matthew 18:15-17ff; I Corinthians 5; II Corinthians 2:5-11).

#### **Article V - Business Meetings**

- i. There shall be regular meetings of the church members for the presentation of reports and the transaction of other business as may be properly brought before the meeting.
- ii. Notice of all business meetings shall be given at the regular worship services on two successive Sunday mornings prior to the meeting. Notice shall include items of business to be discussed.
- iii. A quorum at all business meetings shall consist of not less than 50% of the church membership.
- iv. At meetings having a quorum a simple majority shall be required when voting.

#### **Article VI - Trustees**

- i. The Board of Trustees shall consist of three people, all of whom will have been appointed to their position at a business meeting of the church.
- ii. The Trustees shall perform such legal and business transactions as are peculiarly designed to them by the laws of New Zealand.
- iii. The Trustees shall be empowered to pay fair and reasonable wages (i.e. relative to that which would be paid or received in an arms length transaction) to any employee of the church as approved at a business meeting. This will include any persons within the church, including Trustees, who provide professional services, as approved at a business meeting, provided that such services are not carried out

for the private pecuniary benefit of any individual. Furthermore, no person, whether Pastor, Trustee or other, will be permitted to influence in any way the amount, nature or circumstance of remuneration afforded to themselves, except where specifically exempted by Section CB4(1) of the Income Tax Act 1994.

- iv. As they deem fit, the Trustees may authorise the use of Funds, provided that such Funds are used only for the purposes stated in Article II.

### **Article VII - By-laws & Amendments**

- i. This Constitution may be amended with the vote of not less than 75% of those present at a business meeting and with the unanimous approval of the elders.
- ii. Should it become necessary, the Trustees shall draft and amend, from time to time, with the advice and consent of a business meeting of the church, such by-laws as they deem necessary for the reasonable implementation of the Constitution.
- iii. No by-law or amendment to this Constitution which affects the Charitable Trust status of Grace Baptist Church shall be made without consulting and advising the Inland Revenue Department.
- iv. No proposed amendment will be approved which has not been distributed to the members in written form at least four weeks prior to such a meeting.

### **Article VIII - Winding up Clause**

In the event of Grace Baptist Church being dissolved and ceasing to function as a duly constituted fellowship of Christ's people, any funds or assets remaining shall be distributed, by the appointed Trustees, to approved charitable organisations, with priority being given to those churches in New Zealand subscribing to the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

April, 1997