

Constitution
of the
**Grace Baptist
Church
of
Los Baños**

*Grace and
Truth came
through our Lord
Jesus Christ*

John 1:17

The Church Covenant

Having been led as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now in the presence of God and His holy angels most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love;
To strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort;
To promote its prosperity and spirituality;
To sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines;
To give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin;
To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expense of the church, relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions;
To religiously educate our children;
To seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances;
To walk circumspectly in the world;
To be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our deportment;
To avoid all tattling, backbiting and excessive anger;
To abstain from the abuse of intoxicating drinks as a beverage and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love;
To remember each other in prayer;
To aid each other in sickness and distress;
To cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech;
To be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

D. Quorum.

All voting members should regard their presence at a duly called congregational meeting as a matter of conscience. The voting members present at any congregational meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

E. Chairmanship

One of the officers, normally an elder, shall preside at all business meetings, or one whom they designate in their absence.

F. Voting

Unanimity of heart and mind under God shall at all times be sought and prayed for (Acts 6:5), but when this is not realized, no less than a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting shall be required to make a resolution valid, except where a different proportion is specified in this constitution.

ARTICLE XI

AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended by a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting at a duly convened business meeting of the congregation. No proposed amendment may be voted on which has not been distributed to the congregation in written form at least two weeks prior to such meeting.

AMMENDMENT 1 (October 5, 2014)

A Covenant Meeting shall be regularly held on the first Sunday of April, July and October, unless otherwise re-scheduled. It will address covenant concerns of the church.

CONSTITUTION

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH OF LOS BAÑOS

Los Baños, Laguna

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Grace Baptist Church of Los Baños, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this church shall be Grace Baptist Church of Los Baños Inc., located in Los Baños, Laguna.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to glorify the true and living God in promoting his worship, evangelizing sinners, edifying saints and fellowship. Therefore we are committed to the proclamation of his word including both his perfect Law and his glorious gospel throughout the world, and to the defense of “the faith once for all delivered to the saints.”

ARTICLE III

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

We adopt as the substantial expression of our faith the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. The ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order, and conduct is and must be the Bible alone. Although this Confession, as the work of fallible men, is not without blemishes, it provides an excellent summary of “the things most surely believed among us.” It is an assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness.

ARTICLE IV

AFFILIATION

- A. We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church (Eph. 5:23) and who directs the affairs of the local church through elders chosen and ordained according to the Scriptures. The elders themselves at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Christ in the Scriptures. The members are likewise under the same authority.
- B. The church may and should cooperate and communicate with other like-minded churches in matters of mutual interest and concern. We may seek the assistance and counsel of other churches in matters of special concern to us, but the decision of no other church or group of churches shall at any time be acknowledged as binding on this church. This church may in keeping with this provision enter into association with other churches. Upon recommendation of the elders, such affiliations may be entered into by a vote of the congregation. Any delegate to such an association would then be chosen by the elders.

ARTICLE V

MEMBERSHIP

- A. Requirements for membership**
 - 1. The local church ought to be composed only of those who are true disciples of Jesus according to the Scriptures. The qualifications for membership are profession of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Evidence that this profession is genuine is seen in a scriptural experience of conversion, baptism by immersion following repentance and faith, willing submission to the teaching and government of the church, and consistent Christian living.
 - 2. Members of a local church must submit to the oversight of that church as commanded by the Scriptures (Heb. 13:17). Therefore, anyone who cannot intelligently and freely submit to a church's government should not belong to that church. The church is responsible to strive to maintain unity within its membership (Eph. 4:3). Therefore, members must be in substantial agreement with the church's purpose, confession, and constitution.

ARTICLE IX

TRUSTEES

- A. In order to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's", this church was incorporated as "Grace Baptist Church of Los Baños, Inc." on . This corporation is made up of five members (Trustees) who represent the Church in all its relations with the civil government.
- B. The corporation shall consist of five members (who are the Board of Trustees) namely, one elder to be elected by the elders, two deacons, to be elected by the deacons, and two male members of the congregation to be elected by the congregation at its annual business meeting as specified in the By Laws of the corporation. They shall serve for a term of one year. Each member so elected shall hold office until his successor shall be elected and qualified.
- C. The trustees (members of the corporation) shall perform such legal and business transactions as are required by the laws of the Philippines, the Articles of Incorporation and By Laws of the corporation, and the necessities of church life. In the discharge of their duties, they shall act only at the direction of the office bearers of the church.

ARTICLE X

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

A. Annual Meeting

There shall be an annual business meeting of the church held early in the year. At the annual meeting reports shall be given by the elders, the deacons, the treasurer, and others as requested by the elders. Other business may be transacted at this time. Reports should be given to the elders at least one week ahead of time if they are to be presented at the annual meeting.

B. Monthly Covenant Meeting

There shall be a monthly Covenant Meeting. It shall regularly be held on the Sunday that the Lord's Supper is observed, unless otherwise re-scheduled. It will address covenant concerns of the church.

C. Special Business Meetings

Special business meetings may be called at other times at the discretion of the officers. They may address issues of admission, discipline, emergencies, and other related concerns.

- (b) Caring for the souls of the flock by protecting from heresy and evil teachers, by counseling them, by binding their spiritual wounds, all as those who will give an account (Acts 20:28, 31; Heb. 13:17).
- (c) All that is involved in ruling and giving direction to the church in all its ministries, including regulating the public worship, interviewing applicants for membership, directing the maintenance of discipline, and oversight of evangelistic efforts (1 Tim. 3:4-5, Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:2-5).
- (d) Special involvement in the recognition and encouragement of those who are being given to the church as elders and deacons (Acts 6:2-6; 13:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22).

C. Deacons

1. Deacons are responsible to administer the ordinary business, secular affairs, and benevolence concerns of the church so that the elders may devote themselves without distraction to the more spiritual matters (Acts 6:2-4). They also oversee the maintenance of church premises and properties. They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and subjection to the elders.
2. The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall choose as many as are needed for the work from among those men who give evidence of having the Scriptural qualifications for that office, as set forth in Acts 6:3 and 1 Tim. 3:8-13. The deacons may, with the approval of the elders, delegate certain responsibilities to qualified men and women (1 Tim. 3:11).
3. As a servant of the church in a position of visibility and prominence, a deacon should also be able to affirm his agreement with the church's Articles of Faith and Constitution.
4. As with eldership, deaconing is a gift of the Lord Jesus Christ to His church. Appointment to this office is to be carried out in the same manner as appointment to eldership. The same directions apply to removal from office. Deacons shall occupy their office only as long as they are able to fulfill their duties.
5. In the case of the termination of a deacon, the provision stated in Article VIII. B. 3. (e) shall apply.

B. Distant membership

Regular members who move away from our area and who cannot find another church with which they can in good conscience unite will, at their request, be retained as distant members of this church. Such persons must maintain regular communication with the church in order to retain their associate membership. However, they are urged to diligently seek a church with which they can unite elsewhere.

C. Procedure for membership

1. At least two officers will interview the applicant (provided there are at least two deacons, otherwise a member is appointed) and will report to the membership as a whole. Applicants recommended for membership will be asked to give to the church a short account of their faith.
2. Any of the members is free to ask questions of the applicant pertinent to his conversion and church commitment. After the open forum, the church may discuss the application in the absence of the applicant. Upon motion of acceptance, a vote in favor of at least three-fourths of the members present, the application is deemed accepted. Baptism and membership will proceed as soon as possible.
3. If the applicant has been or is a member of another church, special effort shall be made to determine the applicant's standing in that church and his reasons for leaving. At the discretion of the elders, a letter of inquiry may be sent to that church before he is accepted into the membership of this church.

D. Responsibilities of members

1. Summary: The duties and responsibilities of members are as stated in the church covenant.
2. Highlighted duties and responsibilities:
 - (a) Attendance. All the members of this church are required to attend all the stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered by illness, unusual working conditions, and other such circumstances. The stated meetings of the church are all the services on the Lord's Day (the Sunday School or Bible Study, morning and evening worship, the Lord's Supper, and Baptisms), the prayer meeting, the congregational business meetings, and any special meetings which the officers deem it necessary to call (Heb. 10:25).

- (b) Devotional life. All the members of the church are expected to maintain a healthy life of devotion to our Lord by the use of the private means of grace, such as the regular private and family devotions (including reading of the Bible and prayer), and a proper reverence for and observance of the Lord's Day.
- (c) Giving. The regular, proportionate giving according to our means is part of what God requires of true worshipers. Tithing of one's substance is commended (1Cor. 16:2; 2Cor. 9:6, 7; Mal. 3:8-11). To this should be added gifts and offerings according to one's ability and the willingness of his heart.
- (d) Family life. The members of the church are expected to obey the teachings of the Bible in respect to family life and government (Eph. 5:22ff; 1 Pet. 3:1ff; Prov. 13:24, 22:15, 29:15; Heb. 12:7).
- (e) Holiness of life. Members are to maintain in their lives that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). They are to strive to maintain a clear conscience, especially as a good testimony toward those who are outside the church (Acts 24:16, 1 Pet. 2:12).
- (f) Maintaining unity. Members should seek to avoid all causes of division in the body and strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. All members are to discern their place and gifts in the body of Christ and in honor prefer one another (Rom. 12:10; Eph. 4:1-3; 1Cor. 12:11ff).
- (g) Evangelism. Members are to work and pray zealously for the welfare and the coming of the kingdom of God and seek by all possible means to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt. 6:10; 28:18-20; Rom. 1:16; Phil. 2:16; 1Pet. 3:15).
- (h) Mutual love and service. Members should undertake all their Christian service in fellowship with the church and under the guidance of the elders (Rom. 12:9ff; Phil 2:1ff; Rom. 14:15).
- (i) Submission to oversight. Elders, being ordained by the Holy Spirit, to rule and pastor the flock of Jesus Christ, are to be honored and the members are to submit to their spiritual authority. Members are to pray particularly for elders and deacons in the discharge of their duties (1Thes. 5:12; Heb. 13:17; 1Pt. 5:1-4; Acts 20:28).

- 3. Appointment.
 - (a) The Triune God is alone able to raise up men for the office of the eldership. It is the duty of the church to recognize the work of God in equipping potential elders with the necessary graces and abilities.
 - (b) The existing elders shall recognize those who are functioning in the use of their gifts and bring such before the church for recognition. Sufficient time shall be spent for appropriate discussion. An 80% majority vote shall be required to confirm the elders' recommendation, but unanimity is to be regarded as the aim. The appointment of the elder shall then be publicly ratified and he will be set apart for his duties by the prayer of the whole church.
 - (c) The church shall be responsible to provide for the support of any elder set aside to devote himself to the ministry (1Tim 5:17, 18; 1Cor 9:9, 14). Provision should be made for his retirement.
 - (d) An elder may be removed from office should he neglect his duty, be guilty of censurable offence, fall into error, or hold views contrary to our confession and constitution. If an accusation is made against an elder the directions of 1Tim 5:19-21 are to be followed. The other officers are to approach the matter with great caution, firmness and impartiality.
 - (e) Any office bearer who, in examining himself before God, becomes convinced that he is no longer qualified, or for other good and valid reasons, may resign permanently from office without prejudice to his character and standing in the church (unless some matter for discipline is involved). In any case such as this, the officers should be sought for counsel and direction before the resignation is offered.
 - (f) An elder should not forsake the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made him an overseer, and so should not consider leaving to labor in another sphere without consulting the other officers and the church. In case of such an event, it is desired that such a transfer would not be made without the consent of the church.
- 4. Duties and Responsibilities. The function of elders is to exercise shepherd-like care over the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2-4). This involves:
 - (a) Giving themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2, 4; 2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:9; 2:1).

B. Baptism

Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism, and all such persons should be baptized and joined to a local church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 5:13-14). Since Baptism is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, and the door of entrance into the local church, we shall receive into the membership of the church only those who have been baptized in the Biblical manner, which is by immersion and "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mat. 28:19). As the initiatory sacrament, this should be observed only once by each believer.

C. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper, as the supper of remembrance of our Lord's death, is to be celebrated regularly by the assembled church (1 Cor. 11:26). Normally, this shall be on the first Lord's Day of each month. In order to maintain the purity of the sacrament, the officers will faithfully seek to determine that only true believers who are members in good standing of an evangelical church are admitted to the Table.

ARTICLE VIII

OFFICE BEARERS

A. General Statement

The Lord Jesus Christ is the sole Lord over his Church. He governs his Church by the Word of God. His government is exercised in particular churches through elders who apply the Word of God by their teaching and ruling, or by a pastor. Such leadership is only possible as members are persuaded by the Scriptures of its Biblical validity.

Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-5

B. Elders

1. Qualifications. The qualifications for eldership are set out in the Scriptures, particularly in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Elders are subject to each other, none having superior authority, although differences in function are to be expected according to the variation in gifts and abilities within the eldership.
2. Plurality. Whereas in a new or small congregation only one man may have the gifts necessary to his being recognized as an elder, the Scriptures teach that normally there should be a plurality of elders in a local church (Acts 20:17; Phil. 1:1).

(j) Christian testimony. The behavior of believers in the community must be consistent with scriptural precepts (Tit. 2:5-8; 1Thes. 5:22; 1Pt. 2:12, 13).

(k) Compassion for the needy. Members are expected to exercise sensitivity and active efforts to extend help to the needy, specially of the household of faith (Eph 4:28; Gal. 6:10).

E. Termination of membership

1. By physical death

When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death, he shall automatically be taken off the membership.

2. By transfer

When it is so requested, the elders may grant to a departing member in good standing a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The elders may also refuse to give a letter of transfer to any church which in their judgement is disloyal to the faith or which does not exercise godly care over its members.

3. By exclusion

There are occasions in which a person may be removed from membership whose conduct does not warrant excommunication (2Thes. 3:14, 15).

4. By excommunication

According to the teaching of Scripture, a congregation must cut off from its fellowship and membership any person who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who teaches or insists on holding to false and heretical doctrine, or who persists in disturbing the peace or unity of the church (Mat. 18:15ff, 1 Cor. 5:1ff, Rom. 16:17, Tit. 3:10,11). The procedure to be followed in such excommunication is set forth in Section B of Article VI of this constitution.

ARTICLE VI

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

A. Formative discipline

Every disciple of Jesus Christ must be under his discipline, which is administered to each one through the church (1 Cor. 12:12-27; 1 Thes. 5:12-15; Heb. 3:12, 13; 10:24, 25). Mutual submission to one another (Eph. 5:21) and to the overseers whom Christ has set over his church (1 Pet. 5:5) will result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the church collectively. There are occasions, however, when failure in the application of this formative discipline makes corrective discipline necessary.

B. Corrective discipline

1. General statement.

Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly or scandalous conduct appears among members of the church. In general, admonition and counsel should precede any further discipline unless the case warrants otherwise. Corrective discipline always has as its goal the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender.

2. Rebuke.

According to Mat. 18:15-20 private offenses begin with private rebuke, which may escalate to public rebuke before the church if the offender remains unrepentant. Also, public offenses, especially of office bearers, deserve public rebuke (Gal. 2:11-14; 1 Tim. 5:19-20). If there is no repentance upon rebuke for sin, then a more severe form of discipline is required.

3. Suspension.

Some kinds of conduct may be categorized as “disorderly” or “unruly” (2 Thes. 3:6, 7, 11; 1 Thes. 4:11, 12; 5:14). A disorderly member is not to be immediately excommunicated, rather, the offender is to be suspended in accordance with the directions of 2 Thes. 3:6-15. If a member is guilty of sinful conduct that warrants excommunication yet shows hopeful signs of repentance, it may still be necessary to suspend him for a time from some of the privileges of membership.

Where suspension from membership is imposed, the member may not partake of the Lord’s Supper, attend church meetings, or undertake any service in the church. Suspension may be for a stated period or indefinitely. If there is evidence of repentance, then for-

givenness and restoration to membership will be granted.

4. Exclusion (Dishonorable Dismissal)

Some offences that warrant discipline may not necessarily be totally incompatible with Christian profession. Where there is no evidence of repentance, the offender is dishonorably dismissed from the membership. Such is deemed disfellowshipped but not regarded as an apostate.

5. Excommunication

According to the teaching of Scripture, a congregation must cut off from its fellowship and membership any person who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who teaches or insists on holding to false and heretical doctrine, or who persists in disturbing the peace or unity of the church (Mat. 18:15ff, 1 Cor. 5:1ff, Rom. 16:17, Tit. 3:10,11).

C. Discipline of Officebearers

Office bearers are subject to the same discipline as the other members of the church, with the especial directive in the case of elders that two or three witnesses are necessary to confirm any accusation made against them (1 Tim. 5:19-20). Any office bearer brought under the discipline of the church shall automatically be dismissed from his office until such time as he may be re-appointed by the procedures set forth herein.

D. Enactment of Public Discipline

Any disciplinary action is to be carried out in the spirit of Christian love and humility. Upon the recommendation of the officers, this shall be enacted in a congregational meeting by a three-fourths (3/4) majority of the members present and voting.

ARTICLE VII

SACRAMENTS (ORDINANCES)

A. General Statement

There are two sacraments that our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Neither of them has saving merit, nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the mere physical act of being immersed in the water of Baptism or partaking of the bread and the cup of the Lord’s Supper. These sacraments are not means of “special grace,” but they are “special means of grace” and powerful aids to the faith of believers who participate in them.