

Constitution and Bylaws of Grace Bible Church of Vernon

2017 Version

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CONSTITUTION

1. The name of the Society is Grace Bible Church of Vernon.
2. The Society shall bring praise and glory to God through fulfilling the following purposes:
 - a. Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching, teaching, personal witness and service, and by sending missionaries to do the same;
 - b. Discipling believers to understand and obey everything that the Lord, through the Bible, commands us;
 - c. Uniting believers in bonds of Christian fellowship, encouragement and love to the end that we may build up one another for consistent Christian living and effective service; and,
 - d. Worshiping God both individually and collectively.

BYLAWS

Bylaw I. Definitions

In these Bylaws:

- "GBC" or "the Church" means and refers to the Grace Bible Church of Vernon Society.
- "Church Board" or "the Board" means and refers to the directors of the Society.
- "*Society Act*" means the *Society Act* of the Province of British Columbia from time to time in force and all amendments to it.
- "EFCC" means the Canadian Pacific District, Evangelical Free Church of Canada.

Bylaw II. Membership

Membership reflects a commitment made to God and to Christian brothers and sisters to actively pursue God's calling on one's life. Both the new members and the existing membership shall strive to make membership meaningful and significant. The Holy Spirit has also bestowed upon each believer talents and gifts as He has decided for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ both locally and world wide.

1. Membership Acceptance

Membership in this local church shall be open to anyone who:

1. Openly confesses that Jesus Christ is his or her personal Saviour and Lord (John 3:3,5; Rom 10:9-10; Matt 10:32-33);
2. Has been in regular attendance at the GBC for at least four (4) months;
3. Demonstrates by his or her lifestyle the reality of a transformed life (Gal 5:13-26; 1John 2:29);
4. Accepts the Statement of Faith of the GBC, and is willing to serve with others under the terms of its Constitution and Bylaws (Eph 4:1-6);
5. Has received approval by the Board or its designate and been publicly received (affirmed) into membership by the GBC. All applicants for membership shall be interviewed by those designated by the Board with regards to their regeneration, character, and doctrinal beliefs. Once those designated by the Board are satisfied that the applicant meets the qualifications for membership, they shall give the congregation notice for two weeks of the intent to bring the applicant into membership. Any new staff members that have been thoroughly vetted shall be deemed to be acceptable for membership. Following the two weeks notice, if there is no written objection to the applicant becoming a member, the applicant shall be publicly affirmed into membership by the members at the regular Sunday service or a business meeting. If there is any written objection to the applicant becoming a member, those designated by the Board shall follow the procedure of Matthew 18:15-22 for determination of the problem and/or reconciliation of the individuals. If not resolved, those designated by the Board or the applicant may choose to bring the matter to the membership at a general meeting, but the applicant may then only be received into membership by ordinary resolution.

2. Responsibilities

1. Members should understand that they are joint members of the Body of Christ, His Church, and work together as a team in the various tasks, ministries and responsibilities that are before them. (Rom 12:3-21; 1Cor 12:12-27; Eph 4:1-16; 30-32; Col 3:12-17). Members should cheerfully contribute to the support of the GBC and its ministries as the Lord prospers in all areas of their lives...each according to his or her talents, abilities, and gifts. (Mark 12:41-44; 1Cor 16:2; 2Cor 9:5-8). It is the responsibility of every member to attend the general meetings as regularly as possible for the well-being of the GBC.
2. Members should live out consistently the indwelling life of Christ as taught in the Scriptures. (1Cor 6:9-20; 2Cor 5:17; Gal 2:20; 5:22-26). Personal and corporate Bible study and prayer times are important and are encouraged. (Heb 10:24-25, 2Tim 2:15; 2Pet 3:16-18; Col 3:16; Acts 17:11).

3. Members should understand that all of us are called upon to share the good news of Jesus Christ. (Matt 28:19; Acts 1:8; 1Pet 3:15; 1Cor 3:5-15; 12:28-30).
4. Members should provide a strong Christian environment for their families. The Bible teaches us how to receive peace, harmony, and blessing in the home, thus becoming a model to those facing eternity apart from God. (Eph 5:18-6:9; 1Cor 11:1,3; Prov 31:10-31).
5. Members should hold sacred human life in all its forms of development; abstain from practices that are harmful to the human body and avoid relationships, marriages, partnerships, etc. which are condemned in God's Word. (Gen 1:27-28; Ps 139:13-16; Lev 19:32; 1Tim 5:1-3; Gal 5:19-21; 2Tim 3:1-5; Prov 23:20-21, 29-35; Phil 3:18-19; Col 3:5; Rom 1:18-32; Gen 19).

3. Status

1. The members of GBC are the applicants for incorporation of GBC and those persons who subsequently become members, in accordance with these Bylaws, and, in either case, have not ceased to be members.
2. Those members who are regular in attendance at the services of the GBC and sympathetically cooperating in the interests of the GBC and are nineteen (19) years of age or older shall be Voting Members. All other members are Inactive Members with no voting rights.
3. Any member absenting themselves from the services of the GBC for a period of three (3) months shall be an Inactive Member and, if the Board has not determined that there is necessary cause for the absence then the Board shall remove that person from membership. In either case, the person shall be notified in writing at their last known address of the change in their membership status, and may be restored to membership by the Board once it determines that the person meets the requirements outlined in Bylaw II.3.2.
4. A member may withdraw from membership at any time by providing, to the Board Secretary, a written request to be removed. Upon the death of a member, his or her name will immediately be removed from the membership roll.

4. Dual Membership

Occasionally, an applicant for membership may wish to retain membership in another church. For example, a pastor or missionary of another denomination, of which there is no church in Vernon, may wish to maintain his accreditation or affiliation with that denomination.

1. The responsibilities, rights and status of dual membership shall be the same as for regular membership. The only addition to the process for membership acceptance is that the applicant give suitable reasons to the Board for the necessity of dual membership, and provide a letter of permission from the other church to have dual membership with the GBC.

5. Discipline, Restoration and Termination

1. To foster godly living among its members, and to preserve order, the congregation shall practice church discipline without partiality in accordance with the Word of God. (Matt 18:15-22; Rom 16:17-18; 1Cor 5, 6; 2Cor 2:3-11; Gal 2:11-21; 5:13-6:5; 2Thess 3:6-15; 1Tim 5:19-20; Titus 3:9-11; 2John 9-11).
2. The goal of Biblical discipline is to restore the individual who has sinned. Whenever a situation arises, the person observing or discerning the situation must talk privately with the individual in order to seek to resolve the situation in accordance with the Bible. If this attempt is rebuffed or unwanted, those designated by the Board should be involved and a second attempt made.
3. If the attempts at restoration have all been rebuffed or unwanted by a member and he or she is determined to continue in the wrong direction, then those designated by the Board must request that the Board Chairperson schedule a general meeting to consider termination of the individual's membership. The member must be notified in writing, at least two weeks in advance, of the date, time, location and reason for the impending general meeting, the recommendation that will be given to the members, and that he or she is welcome to attend the meeting and present his or her case. A special resolution at the general meeting shall be required to terminate the individual's membership.

Bylaw III. The EFCC Statement of Faith

The essential theological convictions of GBC are vitally connected to the gospel of Jesus Christ, who died and rose again to give us eternal life. Therefore GBC shall adhere to the following Articles of Faith in both their spirit and entirety.

God's gospel originates in and expresses the wondrous perfections of the eternal, triune 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.

God's gospel is authoritatively revealed in the Scriptures

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 endeavour 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.

God's gospel alone addresses our deepest need

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.

God's gospel is made known supremely in the Person of 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.

God's gospel is accomplished through 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.

God's gospel is applied by the power of 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.

God's gospel is now embodied in the new community called 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.

God's gospel compels us to Christ-like living and witness to the world

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.

God's gospel will be brought to fulfillment by the Lord Himself at the end of this age

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ with His holy angels when He will bring His kingdom to fulfillment and exercise His role as Judge of all. This 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.

God's gospel requires a response that has eternal consequences

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.

Bylaw IV. Additional Articles of Faith

Recognizing the history of GBC as a merger of the Mennonite Church of Vernon and Cornerstone Bible Church that subscribed to a joint statement of faith, the following Articles of Faith shall also be adhered to in both their spirit and entirety.

God's gospel intersects society and culture

1. We believe that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it¹. We believe that God established marriage to be a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman², and that He ordained the family to be the proper environment in which to nurture children³. In His common grace God also establishes governments as His servants for the good order of society⁴, therefore every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities⁵ but, where in conflict with the gospel, believers must obey God rather than mankind⁶ because we are citizens of the kingdom of God⁷. We also believe that Christian liberty will allow for differences in matters of conscience, knowing that each will give account of himself/herself to the Lord⁸. (¹Psalms 89:11; Daniel 4:25; ²Genesis 2:18-24; Matthew 19:4-6; 1Corinthians 7:2-5; ³Proverbs 6:20; Ephesians 6:1-4; ⁴Romans 13:1-7; ⁵Jeremiah 27:5-8; Titus 3:1; ⁶Acts 5:27-29; ⁷1Peter 2:11-21; Philippians 3:17-21; ⁸Romans 14:4-15:7; 1Corinthians 4:4.)

God's gospel encompasses the invisible

2. We believe that angels and demons exist⁹, that Satan is a personal being¹⁰—the father of lies¹¹, the great deceiver, accuser and enemy of God¹²—and is destined to final defeat by the Lord Jesus Christ¹³. Hallelujah! ¹⁴(⁹Hebrews 1:3-14; Matthew 8:28-33; ¹⁰Matthew 4:3-11; ¹¹John 8:44; ¹²Revelation 12:9-10; ¹³Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14; ¹⁴Revelation 19:1-9)

Bylaw V. Organizational Structure

Structural Principles

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the GBC. His Word is the final authority for our faith and practice.
2. The GBC operates under a congregational structure of church government.
3. In addition to the policies and practices described in its Constitution and Bylaws, the GBC is free to establish, amend and/or repeal Policies by ordinary resolutions of the members or Board as long as such policies augment, but do not conflict with, its Constitution and Bylaws. Approved Policies will be recorded in the Policies Manual of the GBC.

Any intended additions, deletions or changes to the Policies must be announced to the membership by written notice and verbal announcement from the pulpit at least two Sundays prior to being voted upon by either the Voting Members or Board. Policies established, amended and/or repealed by the Board shall be the Policies of the GBC unless and until amended and/or repealed by ordinary resolution of the members in general meeting.

4. At general meetings the members shall review the progress of the GBC and make any decisions that are necessary. Between general meetings, the administrative and governing bodies (Leadership) of the GBC shall be the Board together with the Elders, Pastors and other leaders to whom the members grant Leadership responsibilities and authority. The Leadership shall make decisions that the Bylaws and Policies Manual permit them to make, and shall refer other matters, with recommendations, to the membership at general meetings.
5. The Leadership and members shall work together in harmony to carry out the purposes for which the GBC exists.

Bylaw VI. The Board of Directors

1. The Board

1. The Chairperson, Board Secretary, Treasurer, and one or more other persons are the Directors of the GBC. The number of Directors must be four or a greater number as determined from time to time at a general meeting.
2. The Directors acting together are the Board of GBC. Directors must be voting members and at least the age of majority as it is determined by statute in B.C. from time to time. Directors shall act honestly and in good faith and in the best interests of the GBC. In exercising his or her powers and performing his or her functions as a Director, each shall exercise the care, diligence and skill of a reasonably prudent person.
3. If a Director resigns or becomes ineligible, his or her replacement shall be appointed by ordinary resolution of the Board to complete that departing Director's term. The members may, by special resolution, remove a Director before the expiration of his or her term of office, and may elect a successor to complete the term.
4. No more than 25% of the Directors may be employed by the GBC. One person may hold more than one Board position, however each person has only one vote. A Director shall not vote by proxy or appoint an alternate to vote on his or her behalf, however a Director may participate during Board meetings through electronic means. Questions arising at a Board meeting must be decided by a majority of votes and, in the case of a tie vote, the Chairperson does not have a second or casting vote. A Director may not vote on or participate in discussions related to any matter before the Board concerning that Director or any person that is connected to that Director by blood relationship, marriage or adoption, or concerning any corporation controlled by that Director alone or together with persons to whom he or she is connected as aforesaid.
5. The Board shall meet regularly during at least 10 months per year. Extra meetings, up to one per week, must be arranged whenever requested by 20% or more of the Directors. The quorum for Board meetings shall be a majority of the Directors.
6. Most communication and interaction with the Board is expected to come through the Directors to the Board. However, the Board shall maintain an open door policy to all regular attendees of services of the Church, subject to the Policies Manual.
7. When deemed necessary, the Board may appoint an ad-hoc (special) committee with a specific assignment and responsibility that will report to the Board.

8. A Director must not be remunerated for being or acting as a director, but a Director may be reimbursed for all expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred by the Director while engaged in the affairs of the GBC.

2. Board Chairperson

1. The Chairperson of the Board shall, in accordance with the Society Act, these Bylaws, and the Policies Manual, call all meetings of the Board and the membership.
2. The Chairperson shall prepare the agendas for the Board meetings and see that copies are distributed in advance of the date of the meeting. The Chairperson shall direct the Board to give orderly and complete consideration to the matters at hand.
3. The Chairperson shall inform the congregation of any decision affecting them, whether the decision was made or approved by the Board or the voting members in general meeting.
4. The Chairperson, together with the Board Secretary and other Directors, shall ensure that the affairs of the GBC are conducted according to the Society Act, and the Constitution, Bylaws and Policies of the GBC in humility and love.
5. The Chairperson or his or her designate shall be the official voice of the GBC between Board meetings as well as between general meetings.
6. The Chairperson shall submit a written report to the annual general meeting (AGM). The Chairperson shall also organize that written reports of various committees and ministries are provided in advance of the annual general meeting.

3. Board Secretary

1. The Board Secretary shall record the minutes of the Board and general meetings, as well as present the previous minutes at the meetings. The minutes shall be typewritten. Copies of the Board minutes shall be given to the Directors, and a condensed version made readily available to the members.
2. The Board Secretary shall ensure the safekeeping of all legal or valuable documents pertaining to the GBC. The Board Secretary shall ensure that copies of all minutes are made part of these permanent church records.
3. The Board Secretary shall keep and maintain the current version of the Constitution, Bylaws and Policies Manual of the GBC.
4. The Board Secretary shall keep and maintain an accurate and current membership roll.
5. The Board Secretary shall file all forms and filings required under the Society Act.
6. The Board Secretary shall handle all correspondence arising out of meetings of the Board and general meetings. Depending upon the nature of the correspondence, it can be assigned to the church office secretary.
7. The Board Secretary shall, upon termination of office, surrender all records, minute books, and other documents to the Board or to the Board Secretary's successor in office.

4. Treasurer

1. The Treasurer is responsible for the financial affairs of the GBC—including payroll, employment contracts, and other legal requirements that the GBC has as an employer.
2. The Treasurer shall ensure accurate financial records are kept, including the books of account necessary to comply with the Society Act and government agencies. The Treasurer shall also render current financial statements at every annual general meeting. Following review by the Board, the reviewed financial statements must also be readily available to any member, upon request.
3. The Treasurer shall ensure that moneys received are accurately recorded for receipting and securely deposited to a financial institution in a timely manner. At all times, the Treasurer shall respect the confidentiality of giving and the GBC's records. The Treasurer shall also ensure all necessary financial functions of the GBC will carry on at all times.
4. The Treasurer shall ensure necessary reports are provided to government agencies in a timely manner. If there is an Auditor, the Treasurer shall provide the Auditor all documents necessary to conduct the audit.
5. The Treasurer shall, upon termination of office, surrender all financial records to the Board or to the Treasurer's successor in office.

Bylaw VII. Transaction of Business

1. Business Meetings

1. The general business meetings of the GBC shall be an annual general meeting (AGM) occurring within two months of the end of the fiscal year and other general meetings as needed throughout the course of the year.
2. Calling of any general meeting of the GBC shall be by the Board Chairperson or, in his or her absence, another Director, and he or she shall give written notice and verbal announcement from the pulpit at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting. The notice shall include the scheduled date, time, location, and subject matter for the general meeting.
3. No less than fourteen (14) days before general meetings, copies of the proposed agenda (including special resolutions) and minutes from the previous general meeting must be made available for all members. For the AGM, there must be added to these documents the Board Secretary's membership report, financial statements, a budget for the coming year, and written annual reports from committees.
4. The Board, on the requisition in writing by 10% or more of the voting members, shall convene a general meeting without delay. If, within twenty one (21) days after the date of delivery of the requisition, the Board does not convene a general meeting, the requisitioners, or a majority of them, may themselves convene a general meeting to be held within four (4) months after the date of delivery of the requisition.
5. The quorum for any general meeting shall initially be 50% of the voting members. If a quorum is not attained at the first calling of the meeting, the meeting can be rescheduled to occur within one month and will only require 33% of the voting members to form a quorum. In any case, the quorum cannot be less than three (3) voting members. Voting members that are absent from business meetings give, in fact, their silent consent to the decisions made at such meetings.
6. An ordinary resolution is a resolution passed in general meeting by the voting members of the GBC by a simple majority of the votes cast. A special resolution requires a majority of not less than 75% of the votes cast in general meeting, in order to be passed. A special resolution is effective only on the date of its acceptance by the Registrar of Companies in B.C. In the case of a tie vote, the Chairperson does not have a casting or second vote in addition to the vote to which he or she may be entitled as a voting member, and the proposed resolution does not pass.
7. The transaction of business shall be according to the Bylaws and Policies Manual, and a spirit of truth and kindly consideration should prevail at all times as the members seek to work together to accomplish the common purpose. Motions and amendments to motions are allowed from the floor of a meeting, however business of a critical nature which creates disturbance or division should be referred to the Board for its recommendation to the members.
8. A rule, made by the GBC in a general meeting, does not invalidate a prior act of the Directors that would have been valid if that rule had not been made.

2. Voting and Nominations

1. Each voting member is entitled to one (1) vote.
2. Voting shall be by show of hands, except as specified elsewhere in these Bylaws or the Policies, or where a ballot vote is requested by an ordinary resolution. Voting by proxy is permitted as provided in the Policies Manual. Participation by electronic means in member meetings is prohibited.
3. Nominations may originate from a nominating committee but may at all times be made from the floor of the meeting by voting members if the nominee confirms in person or in writing that he or she meets the qualifications for the position and is willing to participate in the election.
4. Unless otherwise noted in these Bylaws or the Policies Manual, all elected positions are for a one-year term, ending at the next AGM, and separate elections shall be held for each position to be filled.

3. Revisions to the Constitution or Bylaws

1. Any proposed revisions to the Constitution or Bylaws shall require the approval of 75% of the voting members.

4. Financial matters

1. The GBC may, by special resolution of the membership, from time to time raise or borrow and secure the payment of any sum or sums of money for the purpose of the GBC and for that purpose may execute any mortgages, debentures or bonds or give or execute any other form of security whatsoever of real and/or personal property of the GBC or any part thereof and sign, seal and deliver the same.
2. The GBC may acquire, own, dispose of, improve, encumber, and convey property real and personal, for its purposes, in conformity with the laws of the province of British Columbia. Real estate may be sold, conveyed, exchanged, mortgaged, or encumbered only by special resolution of the membership.
3. The GBC's name must not be used as a part of the name of a ministry of the GBC except when the GBC has so authorized that ministry. No person or group of persons shall have the power to commit the GBC to any contract, agreement, or expenditure save only as authorized by the voting members, the Society Act, these Bylaws, and the Constitution.

Bylaw VIII. Affiliation

1. The GBC shall remain autonomous in that the voting members and the Board retain the control of all the affairs of this church upon the basis of its Constitution and Bylaws. Recognizing the need for wider contacts, mutual counsel and fellowship, cooperation in wider responsibilities, missionary and evangelistic outreach, the GBC may choose to be affiliated with other organizations. However, affiliation must be with other societies or associations, whether or not incorporated, with similar purposes or purposes beneficial to the GBC.
2. The Society shall be carried on without purpose of gain for its members, and any profits or other accretions to the Society shall be used for promoting its purposes. Upon wind up or dissolution of the Society, the assets remaining after payment of all costs, charges and expenses properly incurred in the wind-up, and after the payment to the employees of any arrears of salaries or wages, and after payment of any other debts of the Society, shall be distributed to the charitable organization(s) registered under the provisions of the Income Tax Act (Canada) as the directors may designate. This statement was previously unalterable, and can only be altered with greater than 95% approval of its members.
3. The GBC has chosen to be affiliated with the Canadian Pacific District, Evangelical Free Church of Canada (EFCC). Should conditions arise that dissolution of the Grace Bible Church of Vernon is imminent, its remaining physical assets shall be transferred to the EFCC.
4. Any dispute concerning greater than 25% of the GBC members which directly or indirectly may benefit or negatively impact the EFCC will be determined by an arbitrator appointed by agreement between the two GBC disputing parties. If the parties cannot agree on an arbitrator, the arbitration will be through a panel of three arbitrators selected as follows:
 - a) each of the two parties will appoint one arbitrator
 - b) the appointed arbitrators will appoint the third arbitrator, and
 - c) the third arbitrator will act as chair.

The disputing parties shall equally share any costs of arbitration, and any arbitrator appointed under this Bylaw must hold a British Columbia recognized qualification as an arbitrator.