

***The Constitution of
Grace Reformed Baptist Church
Palmerston North
New Zealand***

Table of Contents

Article I	Name
Article II	Purpose
Article III	Articles of Faith
Article IV	Members and Church Officers
	A Members
	B Elders
	C Deacons
Article V	Business Meetings
Article VI	Bye-laws and Amendments
Article VII	Charitable Status and Trustees
Article VIII	Winding-up Clause
Appendix	Privileges and Responsibilities of Membership

***The Constitution of
Grace Reformed Baptist Church
Palmerston North
New Zealand***

Article I - Name

The name of this Church shall be "*Grace Reformed Baptist Church*".

Article II - Purpose

The purpose of this Church is to glorify God by promoting true worship, the correct administration of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, 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 the Bible alone, the teachings of which we believe to be adequately summarised in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith. The Church adopts this as its statement of faith (with liberty of individual conscience concerning Chapter 10 Paragraph 3 and the second half of Chapter 26 Paragraph 4).

Article IV - Members and Church Officers

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

A - Members

A person may become a member of Grace Reformed Baptist Church in one of two ways and the elders shall keep a record of their names:

1. Membership by baptism upon profession of faith. All baptisms will be conducted in accordance with the Scriptures as understood by chapter 29 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith. The elders will have approved the baptism and the person shall become a member of the church at the point of baptism (Acts 2:38-47).
2. Membership by application and acceptance by the church. Those who meet the following criteria may be accepted into membership of Grace Reformed Baptist Church:
 - 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 as understood by chapter 29 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith (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 may not agree with all the Articles of Faith, but nevertheless give their general consent to them, respecting that these form the doctrinal basis of the Church and consequently not seeking to dissuade others from them (Psalm 133:1; Philippians 1:27-28). Such must firmly believe:

- (a) the Divine authority and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures (II Timothy 3:16)
 - (b) the trinity of the Godhead (Mark 1:9-11)
 - (c) regeneration by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3)
 - (d) justification by faith alone in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16-17)
 - (e) salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8)
 - (f) Christ will return in glory to judge all mankind, who will receive either eternal life or everlasting destruction (I Thess. 4:15-18, II Thess. 1:7-10)
- ii. Those who are not Members of another Church (except in special circumstances, e.g. students).
 - iii. Those who have been privately interviewed by the Elders and recommended to the Church at a Business Meeting.
 - iv. 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 those recommended by the Elders (Acts 2:40-47).

Note: Further clarification of the privileges and responsibilities of membership are outlined in the Appendix.

B - Elders

From time to time Elders shall be appointed to lead the Church in humility as undershepherds 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). The ideal is a plurality and equality of Elders.

Elders shall be men who meet the following criteria:

- i. Men who meet the requirements for membership. 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 (Article III) and who seek to uphold the truths of scripture as expressed in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith.
- v. Men who have been privately interviewed by the Elders and recommended to the Church.
- vi. Men who have been affirmed as an Elder by a Church Members' business meeting (see Article V). If no biblical objections are received by the Elders from Members before such a meeting, 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).

Members may suggest to the Elders men whom they consider may be qualified to serve in this office. The Elders may interview and recommend these men to the Church as they see fit.

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 whose gifts for preaching and teaching, and whose 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.
- 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. Those who have been affirmed as a Deacon by a Church Members' business meeting (see Article V). If no biblical objections are received by the Elders from Members before such a meeting, arrangements shall be made to publicly set apart those recommended to the Deaconate at a worship service of the Church.

Members may suggest to the Elders those whom they consider may be qualified to serve in this office. The Elders may interview and recommend these to the Church as they see fit.

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

A) Members' 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. Unless otherwise specified, a simple majority shall be required when voting.
- v. An Elder shall chair all Members' meetings

B) Officers' Meetings

- i. Officers shall meet regularly and as appropriate to the needs of the Church.
- ii. An Elder shall chair all officers' meetings

Article VI - By-laws & Amendments

- i. This Constitution may be amended with the vote of not less than 75% of the membership and with the unanimous approval of the Elders.
- ii. Should it become necessary, the Officers and 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 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 VII Charitable status & Trustees

Should this Church be granted charitable and / or donee status by the New Zealand Inland Revenue Department, gain property or pay wages, the following shall apply:

- i. This Church is a New Zealand organisation, seeking to minister in New Zealand.
- ii. Any income, benefit or advantage shall be applied to the charitable (religious) purposes of this Church as set out in Articles I to III.
- iii. No Member, or any person associated with a Member shall participate in or materially influence any decision made by the Church in respect of payment to or on behalf of that Member or associated person of any income, benefit or advantage. Any such income paid shall be reasonable and relative to that which would be paid in an arm's length transaction (being the open market value).
- iv. No addition to or alteration of this Constitution shall be approved if it affects the charitable aims, the personal benefit clause, or the winding up clause as set out in this Article VII.
- v. The Board of Trustees shall consist of three people, ideally office-bearers, all of whom will have been appointed to their position at a business meeting of the Church.
- vi. The Trustees shall perform such legal and business transactions as are peculiarly designed to them by the laws of New Zealand.
- vii. 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.
- viii. 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.
- ix. 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.
- x. The Trustees and Church Officers shall be fully indemnified against all actions, costs, charges, losses, damages and expenses which they may incur in execution of their duties, except those incurred by their own wrongful action done intentionally or with gross neglect.

Article VIII - Winding up Clause

In the event of Grace Reformed 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 other churches in New Zealand sharing the Articles of Faith.

Appendix - Privileges and Responsibilities of Membership

Among others, the following are Scriptural principles for regulating the conduct of Church Members:

1. Promotion of Christian Fellowship

The Church is described as the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5, I Cor.12:24-27) and therefore Members bear the mutual responsibility to:

- bear one another's burdens. (Gal.6:2)
- uphold one another in prayer. (Jas.5:16, Col.2:4)
- preserve fellow Christians' characters. (Jas. 4:11)
- show hospitality. (Rom. 12:13, Heb. 13:2)
- do good to all, especially those who belong to the family of believers. (Gal.6:10)
- do all in their power to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:3)

2. Participation in Public Worship

It is the duty of all Church Members to be as faithful as circumstances permit in attendance at services of worship and other appropriate meetings such as mid-week meetings and business meetings (Heb.10:24-25). When unable to be present at any meeting of the Church it is expected that Members inform the Elders so that they may be upheld in prayer. (Acts 2:42).

3. Participation in Church Decisions

The voting procedures for Church meetings are not to be taken as expressing democratic government of the Church. There is only one Head of the Church, who is present wherever His Church is found, able to communicate His Will and sufficient in all things. Every Member has an obligation, privately and corporately, to seek the Lord's revealed Will in every matter concerning His Church. These procedures are a means of arriving at a shared conviction of what the Lord has revealed to be His Will for the local Church. Membership bestows the privilege and responsibility of being prayerfully involved in Church decisions, including:

- setting apart Elders and Deacons (Acts 1:23-26, 6:3-5)
- sending out missionaries (Acts 13:1-3)
- discipline (I Cor. 5:4-5, II Cor. 2:5-8, II Thes.3:6,14-15)

4. Duty towards Church Leadership

Pastors, Elders and Deacons are God's gift to the local Church and as such have special responsibilities to oversee and care for those whom God has placed under their care. Members have a responsibility to pray for those whom God has placed in the Church as leaders (Col. 4:3, Heb.3:7,18). Members should honour those whom God has placed in the Church as leaders and respect their spiritual authority (I Thes. 5:12-13, Heb. 13:17).

5. Financial support of the Church

Members have an obligation to give regular financial support to the Church in proportion to the degree to which the Lord has blessed them with this world's goods (I Cor. 16:2, 2 Cor. 9:6-7, Deut. 16:17).

6. Discipline

The purpose of discipline is to uphold the glory and rule of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Church, to maintain its purity and to restore those who err. Any action is to be carried out in the spirit of Christian love and humility, and confidentiality should be maintained.

Members, by virtue of their membership, submit themselves to the disciplinary control of the Church, in line with the provisions of the New Testament and the obligations arising from membership as outlined in this constitution.

Personal grievances should be settled by Members in accordance with the instructions laid down in Matt. 5:23-24 and Matt. 18:15-18.

Members are to observe the provisions of II Thess. 3:6,14 and II John 10 in their dealings with errant brethren.

7. Out-of-Town Members

From time to time some members may leave to take up employment elsewhere or for other reasons (e.g. care of family). Members who move away are encouraged to join a like-minded church in their new locality (preferably FRBCNZ affiliated) where feasible at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime, we encourage these members to remain in regular contact with the Elders, continuing to uphold the work here in prayer and supporting the work financially to some degree (see item 5 above). In turn, during this time the Elders of GRBC commit to maintaining contact with the members and to providing as much ongoing pastoral care as is practicable.

Members who move away and who no longer remain in regular contact or fail to respond to church correspondence will be deemed to have lapsed in membership six months from the date of leaving Palmerston North; their names shall be removed from the membership list upon this anniversary and the Elders' responsibility for their pastoral care shall be deemed to have ceased.

Where members do maintain regular and meaningful contact with the Elders their membership of GRBC may continue:

- a) for up to a year if they live in the vicinity of a like-minded church (whereupon their membership of GRBC will cease whether or not they decide to join that church), or
- b) indefinitely if there are compelling reasons why they cannot join a church in their locality.