



Grace Church of Cochrane Policy Regarding Church Discipline

Extract from the Constitution & Bylaws of Grace Church of Cochrane, Article VIII: Church Discipline

Section 1. The Purpose of Church Discipline

The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct and restoring him or her to the fellowship of the church (Galatians 6:1).

Section 2. The Process of Church Discipline

Members of this Society, whether Elders or Gospel Partners, who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture as determined by the Elders, shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18. Before such dismissal, however,

(a) it shall be the duty of any member of Grace Church of Cochrane who has knowledge of the erring individual's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct such erring individual in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If the erring individual does not heed this warning, then

(b) the warning member shall again go to the erring individual, seeking his or her repentance, but accompanied by one or two individuals who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent. The first and second warnings may occur with no specified time interval. If the erring individual still refuses to heed this warning, then

(c) it shall be brought to the attention of the Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Elders, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Elders). If the Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Elders, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Elders) determine - after thorough investigation in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:19 - that there is corroborating evidence that the erring individual has sinned or is continuing to sin, that he or she has been appropriately confronted, and that he or she has refused to repent, then the Elders shall inform the Society at a regularly scheduled worship service or an annual or special general meeting in order that the congregation may call the erring individual to repentance. If the erring individual demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect may be given at a regularly scheduled worship service or an annual or special general meeting. If, however, the erring individual does not repent in response to the congregation in its collective call to repentance, then

(d) he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the membership of the Society and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service or an annual or special general meeting.

Section 3. Restoration After Church Discipline

If the erring individual, after such dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement before the Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Elders, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Elders), then upon the Elders' verification of such repentance, he or she shall be publicly restored to all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of membership.

Section 4. Accelerated Process for Church Discipline

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Elders in the exercise of their discretion may proceed directly to the third stage of church discipline (i.e. the informing of the congregation at a regularly scheduled worship service or an annual or special general meeting in order that the congregation may call the erring individual to repentance), or to the fourth stage of church discipline (i.e. the dismissal from the membership of the Society) when one or more of the following have occurred:

(a) Where the transgression and the refusal to repent have been public, i.e. openly and to the offense of the whole congregation (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-5);

(b) Where the disciplined party has taught or otherwise disseminated doctrine deemed false or erroneous by the Elders, then chosen to disregard the direction and reproof of the Elders (cf. Romans 16:17); or

(c) Where the disciplined party has been warned twice to cease from factious and divisive conduct and has chosen to disregard that warning (cf. Titus 3:10-11).

Section 5. The Eldership of the Local Church As Final Court of Appeal

The members of this Society, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with Grace Church of Cochrane, agree that there shall be no appeal to any outside court because of the dismissal or because of public statements to the congregation at the third or fourth stages of church discipline.

Section 6. Forfeiture of the Right to Resign Membership by Those Under Church Discipline

Members who are under discipline by the Society, as defined in the previous paragraphs, forfeit and waive the right to resign from this Society. Resignations from membership are possible only by members who are in good standing and who are not under any disciplinary action (cf. Article V, Section 7 of these Bylaws).

Section 7. Prohibitions Against Entering Society Property or Meetings

Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion and approval of the Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Elders, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Elders), a member, non-member regular attendee, or other individual may be notified that he or she is not to be present upon Society premises or any other designated place of meeting for such a period of time as is deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of others on Society premises. Such required absence may, but need not, be concurrent with church discipline of that person.

Section 8. Removal of Non-Attenders From Membership

Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion and approval of the Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Elders, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Elders), the names of any members who have not attended a worship service at Grace Church of Cochrane for a period of six months or longer may be removed from the membership rolls.

Our Promises To One Another Regarding Church Discipline

We do acknowledge and joyfully confess the biblical mandate to hold one another accountable for our doctrine and conduct before the Lord.

We acknowledge that we have read the Grace Church of Cochrane Policy Regarding Church Discipline and understand its contents.

We agree with and submit to be bound by the Grace Church of Cochrane Policy Regarding Church Discipline.

We willfully and knowingly submit to the authority of the Elders of Grace Church of Cochrane as defined by Scripture, and to the accountability of the church as described in the Doctrinal Standards and the Policy Regarding Church Discipline.

We promise, by God's grace, to fulfill our responsibility to hold our brothers and sisters accountable before the Lord, with wisdom and gentleness.

Signed this _____ day of _____ in the year of our Lord _____,

Signed by Gospel Partner

Name of Gospel Partner (please print)

Countersigned by Elder

Name of Elder (please print)