

How We Function

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS of Grace Church of Rootstown

Rootstown, Ohio

Revised September, 2024

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Preamble

We, the members of Grace Church of Rootstown (hereinafter the "Church"), do ordain and establish the following Constitution and By-laws. This is a legal and practical document to set forth how the Church functions.

Article I. Organization

The formal, legal name of this local Church shall be Grace Church of Rootstown. The purposes of our existence are to provide and maintain worship (Acts 2:41-47¹), discipleship (Colossians 1:9-12²), service (Ephesians 4:11-13³), and evangelism (Matthew 28:18-20⁴; Acts 1:8) for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31⁶), as defined in Article II. We do this by making disciples of all nations, baptizing believers, teaching them all that Christ commands, maintaining the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace, and being salt and light. This Church shall be guided by a group of elders subject to the Doctrinal Statement, attached hereto as Appendix A and incorporated herein by reference.

In all matters of polity and practice, we shall act upon our conviction that the New Testament local church is not dependent upon the leading of any ecclesiastical or denominational organization but is an autonomous, self governing fellowship, in direct submission to the authority of Christ as the head of this Church, the agency of the Holy Spirit as the helper, and the word of God as conclusive in all matters of faith, fellowship, and function.

We believe that the local church, including this Church, is central to the plan of God and the life of the family of God. We believe that God has designed the church as an inter dependent community of gathered believers. We believe that we are to have the same love for this Church that Christ did, which motivated Him to die for the church. We believe that the church is the pillar and support of the truth and that we, as members of the church, are always to defend sound doctrine. We believe that this Church is to function as a family of families in all things.

In addition, we adhere to: (1) the authority of the Scripture, which is God breathed and that no human endeavor or decree can override; (2) the autonomy of the local church in which the local church is accountable to Jesus Christ as the head of this Church and the mandates of Scripture; (3) the priesthood of believers in which every believer has access to our great High Priest, Jesus Christ; (4) the ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion and the observance of the Lord's Supper or communion; and, (5) Church membership, in which individuals who have a clear testimony in Christ and publicly identified themselves through believer's baptism choose to fellowship with this Church. This Church will continue to hold fast to all of these doctrinal truths.

Article II. Statement of Purpose

This Church exists to glorify God by bringing people to intimately know and bear witness to Christ through the proclamation of God's Word. We also do this by serving Christ as He established, expands, and strengthens this Church. We also do this by doing all those things as described in Article I of this document.

To implement this purpose legally, the Church is incorporated under the laws of the State of Ohio, so that it may own, provide and/or maintain a place of worship (including suitable real estate and

buildings), receive, hold and disburse gifts, bequests and funds, and/or do all and sundry things necessary or incident to carry on such purposes.

Article III. Membership in our Family of Families

Section 1: Eligibility

Those persons who profess salvation and demonstrate having been regenerated by the Holy Spirit through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, have been baptized as a believer as an act of obedience to Christ, and have met the requirements for membership, are eligible to apply for membership in this Church, which is a family of families (John 1:12⁷; John 3:16⁸; John 6:37⁹; Romans 10:9-10¹⁰; Titus 3:5¹¹).

Section 2: Requirements

All individuals who desire membership in this Church must be interviewed by the elders, fill out and sign an application for membership, complete a short course of instruction about membership, and agree to abide by and adhere to the doctrinal practices of this Church as outlined in this Constitution and By-laws. The elders will publicly present successful candidates as new members.

If, after meeting with a prospective member, the elders determine that the applicant fails to meet the requirements, membership shall be denied. The decision made by the elders at that time shall be final and binding upon all persons and there shall be no appeal to any court. Such decision shall not bar an applicant from asking for reconsideration at a later time.

Section 3: Expectations of Members in our Family of Families

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we do most solemnly and joyfully commit to participate in all of the "one anothers" of the New Testament as one body in Christ and to actively participate with the Church as a family of families. We, as members, therefore commit by the aid of the Holy Spirit:

- A. To walk together in Christian love (Ephesians 5:2¹²; Colossians 3:14¹³);
- B. To exercise Christian care and watchfulness over one another (1 Corinthians 12:25¹⁴; Galatians 6:1¹⁵);
- C. To pray with and for one another, sharing our burdens, sorrows, and joys (Acts 2:42¹⁶, 1 Timothy 2:1¹⁷, James 5:16¹⁸, Galatians 6:2¹⁹, Romans 12:15²⁰, 1 Corinthians 12:26²¹);
- D. To be thoughtful and courteous to one another, to be slow to take offense, and to be quick to forgive and seek forgiveness (Ephesians 4:25, 32²²; Colossians 3:13²³; Matthew 5:23-24²⁴);

- E. To guard the spiritual and scriptural purity, peace, and prosperity of the Church, and witness as to the saving grace of God (1 Corinthians 6:13²⁵; 2 Timothy 1:14²⁶; Matthew 18:15-20²⁷; Ephesians 4:13²⁸; Matthew 5:16²⁹);
- F. To assist, through the gifts of the Spirit, in the work of the Church, and to witness as to the saving grace of God (Romans 12:6-8³⁰; 1 Corinthians 12:7³¹; 1 Peter 4:10³²);
- G. To contribute to the financial support of this Church, the relief of the needy, and the evangelism of all people as the Lord leads (2 Corinthians 9:7³³; Deuteronomy 15:11³⁴; Galatians 2:10³⁵; Philippians 4:15-16³⁶);
- H. To love and to pray for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 13:34-35³⁷; 1 Thessalonians 3:12³⁸; 1 Timothy 2:1³⁹; James 5:16⁴⁰);
- I. To engage regularly in personal Bible reading and prayer (2 Timothy 2:15⁴¹; 1 Peter 2:2⁴²; Matthew 6:6⁴³; James 1:5⁴⁴);
- J. To bring up children as they are entrusted to our care in the training and admonition of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6⁴⁵; Ephesians 6:4⁴⁶);
- K. To walk circumspectly in the world, to provide things honest in the sight of all men, to be faithful in engagements, exemplary in deportment, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts (Colossians 4:5⁴⁷; Titus 2:11-12⁴⁸, Titus 3:8⁴⁹; 1 Peter 2:12⁵⁰; 1 Timothy 2:1-4⁵¹);
- L. To endeavor by example, by work, and by prayer, to win others to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8⁵²; Matthew 5:16⁵³; 1 Peter 2:12⁵⁴; 1 Timothy 2:14⁵⁵);
- M. To commit to regularly pray for, loyally support, and properly submit to the elders of this Church who lead the work of this Church in the keeping of Scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:12⁵⁶; Hebrews 13:7, 17⁵⁷);
- N. To stimulate one another to love and good deeds, to encourage one another, and assemble together with this Church (Hebrews 10:24-25⁵⁸); and
- O. To unite, as soon as possible, with a local church of like faith, should we leave this Church for any reason.

In addition, each member of this Church understands and will follow the responsibilities set forth in Titus 2:2-8⁵⁹, including:

- P. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in doctrine and in steadfastness, and are to mentor and instruct younger men;
- Q. Older women are to be reverent in behavior, not given to much wine, and are to teach good things to younger women;

- R. Younger men are to be self-controlled; and
- S. Younger women are to love their husbands and children, be self-controlled, chaste, homemakers, and obedient to their husbands.

Section 4: Membership Rights

Members shall be involved in worship and service within the Church and shall be entitled to all membership privileges as part of this family of families as defined in this Article including being considered for (1) affirmation of the appointment of the positions of elder and deacon, (2) the affirmation of a new pastor-teacher, and (3) affirmation of any amendments to the Constitution and By-laws of the Church. Only males shall be considered for the position of elder or deacon.

Section 5: Discipline and Restoration

The purpose of Church discipline and restoration is to affect a return to a biblical standard of conduct or doctrine in a member* who errs (Galatians 6:1⁶⁰), to maintain purity in the local Church (1 Corinthians 5:6⁶¹), and to deter sin (1 Timothy 5:20⁶²). As in any family, an erring member must be disciplined for his own sake and for the sake of the family, as the actions and attitudes of the individual family member are a reflection of the family as a whole. Any member of this Church who conducts himself or herself in a manner inconsistent with biblical teaching shall be dealt with as follows, according to Matthew 18:15-18⁶³:

- A. It is the duty of any member of this Church who has knowledge of an erring member's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct the erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
- B. If the erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two other members as witnesses to warn and correct, seeking repentance and restoration.
- C. If the erring member still refuses to heed the warning, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the elders, who, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall, if necessary, make an appropriate report to the Church encouraging the family of families to pray for repentance and restoration of the erring member.
- D. If the erring member refuses to heed the warnings of the elders and the Church, he or she shall be dismissed from the Church pursuant to the Scriptures and treated as an unbeliever. The family of families shall be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring member.

It is clearly understood that the discipline process will continue to conclusion (unless the member repents) whether the erring member leaves the Church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership. There shall be no appeal of the discipline process which shall be final and binding upon all persons. The purpose of church discipline is to bring one to repentance and, ultimately, back into fellowship within this family of families.

*or a regular attendee, as applicable.

Section 6: Termination

Membership may be terminated in one of three ways:

- A. By physical death;
- B. By exclusion: If a member habitually absents himself or herself from the gatherings of the Church without valid reason, or if due to relocation that member ceases to maintain a vital contact with the Church, or the member requests, that member may be excluded from membership. If an excluded member applies again for membership, the procedures set forth in this Article at Section 2 will again be followed; or
- C. By dismissal as a final step of Church discipline. The elders shall only apply the above-mentioned dismissal in strict accordance with the Scriptures.

Article IV. Church Leadership

The officers of this Church shall be elders and deacons. All Church officers must be active members of the Church and meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

The government of this Church, the conduct of its business, the supervision of its general work, its organization, and its spiritual life, shall, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and consistent with the Bible, be vested with the elders.

Section 1: Elders

Qualifications of elders

Elders lead this Church as a family of families and therefore elders must be men who are above reproach and meet the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7⁶⁴ and Titus 1:6-9⁶⁵, and be active members of this Church. Elders shall be desirous of serving in that office (1 Timothy 3:1⁶⁶) and shall be:

- A. Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2⁶⁷; Titus 1:6-7⁶⁸);
- B. Husband of one wife, a one-woman man (1 Timothy 3:2⁶⁹; Titus 1:6⁷⁰);
- C. Temperate, sober, vigilant (1 Timothy 3:2⁷¹);
- D. Sober-minded, prudent (1 Timothy 3:2⁷²; Titus 1:8⁷³);
- E. Of good behavior; orderly, respectable (1 Timothy 3:2⁷⁴);
- F. Given to hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2⁷⁵; Titus 1:8⁷⁶);
- G. Apt to teach; able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching (1 Timothy 3:2⁷⁷; Titus 1:9⁷⁸):

- H. Not given to strong drink (1 Timothy 3:3⁷⁹; Titus 1:7⁸⁰);
- I. Not violent; not pugnacious (1 Timothy 3:3⁸¹; Titus 1:7⁸²);
- J. Patient, moderate, forbearing, and gentle (1 Timothy 3:3⁸³);
- K. Not a brawler; uncontentious; not soon angry or quick-tempered (1 Timothy 3:3⁸⁴; Titus 1:7⁸⁵);
- L. Not covetous; not a lover of money: not greedy of base gain (1 Timothy 3:3⁸⁶; Titus 1:7⁸⁷);
- M. Rules well his own house; his children are faithful, not accused of rebellion to God (1 Timothy 3:4⁸⁸; Titus 1:7⁸⁹);
- N. Not a novice; not a new convert (1 Timothy 3:6⁹⁰);
- O. Has a good report or reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7⁹¹);
- P. Not self-willed (Titus 1:7⁹²);
- Q. Loving what is good (Titus 1:8⁹³);
- R. Just, fair (Titus 1:8⁹⁴);
- S. Holy, devout (Titus 1:8⁹⁵); and
- T. Self-controlled (Titus 1:8⁹⁶).

Duties of Elders

As overseers of the local church, and, specifically, this Church, it shall be the duty of the elders to:

- A. Be devoted to prayer and the study of God's Word and sustain a caring ministry for the flock, which involves serving to help facilitate the Church's spiritual growth, praying for the sick, and shepherding the congregation (Acts 6:4⁹⁷; 2 Timothy 2:15⁹⁸; James 5:14⁹⁹; Acts 20:28¹⁰⁰; Acts 20:35¹⁰¹; Hebrews 13:17¹⁰²);
- B. Teach and exhort as well as refute those who contradict the truth, which involves ensuring that all instructors, adult teachers, children's teachers and student ministry leaders are properly qualified (John 2 1:17¹⁰³; 1 Timothy 3:2¹⁰⁴; Titus 1:9¹⁰⁵; Acts 20:28-31¹⁰⁶; 1 Timothy 4:13¹⁰⁷; Timothy 5:17¹⁰⁸; Hebrews 13:7¹⁰⁹);
- C. Lead by Christ-like example, which involves: (1) consistently modeling biblical character, attitudes, values, and behavior among the congregation, (2) providing and inviting the opportunity for frequent and ongoing contact with members of the congregation, and (3) conducting the affairs of the Church in an atmosphere of openness and mutual sensitivity, focusing as much on nurturing one another as on

decision-making. (1 Peter 5:1-3¹¹⁰; Hebrews 13:7¹¹¹; 1 Timothy 4:6-16¹¹²; 2 Corinthians 2:4¹¹³);

- D. Oversee the affairs of the Church (Acts 20:28¹¹⁴, Acts 15:22¹¹⁵; 1 Timothy 3:1,4,5, 4:14, 5:17¹¹⁶; Titus 1:7¹¹⁷; 1 Peter 5:1-2¹¹⁸), which involves: (1) maintaining the legal status of the Church; (2) being responsible for the direction of all disbursements and securing of all funds necessary to meet the current expenses of the Church; (3) together with the other elders, administering the ordinances in accordance with the word of God; (4) sharing in the pastoral care of the congregation along with the other elders; (5) performing marriages as he may deem appropriate at his discretion in accordance with the laws of God and the State of Ohio; (6) officiating at funerals of members of the Church and non-members as he may deem appropriate at his discretion; (7) admonishing the unruly, encouraging the faint-hearted, and helping the weak (1 Thessalonians 5:14¹¹⁹); (8) exercising legal care and biblical stewardship of all Church property and assets; (9) conducting the Annual Family Meeting of the Church; (10) presenting the approved budget to the congregation at the Annual Family Meeting of the Church; (11) recommending, approving and appointing officers of the Church; (12) approving all candidates for Church membership; (13) Appointing the duly affirmed pastor-teacher; (14) calling and appointing any and all other qualified elders to meet the needs of the family of families; (15) being responsible for the hiring, employment, terms, and compensation assignment of responsibilities, direction, oversight, and termination of employment of all Church staff; (16) approving all subordinate ministries, organizations, and counsels of the Church; and (17) communicating to the family of families on a regular basis concerning the activities, vision and concerns of the elders;
- E. Perform other constitutional, scriptural, and general duties of oversight as may be appropriate (Acts 20:28¹²⁰; Acts 15¹²¹; 1 Timothy 3:1¹²²; 1 Peter 5:1-3¹²³; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13¹²⁴).

Section 2: Deacons

The deacons shall consist of members possessing the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13¹²⁵. A deacon shall be a man of dignity, not double-tongued, not addicted to strong drink, not fond of sordid gain, holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, first tested and found above reproach.

The deacons shall assist the elders in the shepherding of the saints, aid in the general spiritual care of the family of families, and perform such other duties as assigned by the elders.

A deacon shall be called from among the male members by the unanimous decision of the elders and affirmed by the active members of the Church.

Section 3: Selection and Dismissal of Church Leadership

A. Elders

An elder shall be called from among the male members by a unanimous decision of the present elders, and affirmed by members of the Church. Elder candidates for this position must desire to serve (1 Timothy 3:1¹²⁶); be qualified to serve (1 Timothy 3:1-6¹²⁷; Titus 1:7-9¹²⁸), be examined and affirmed (1 Timothy 3:10; 5:22¹²⁹), and maintain themselves in a manner worthy of their calling and congruent with the moral and ethical standards of the Word of God both in the administration of their office and in their personal lives (1 Timothy 5:18-20¹³⁰).

The elder's tenure shall be for an indefinite period of time, subject to his ability and availability to serve. An elder who is unable to carry out his duties, may at the direction of the other elders, be required to step down from the office of elder, until he is able to once again fulfill his calling.

An elder may be removed from office, based upon a decision by three-fourths (3/4) of the elders, at any time based upon moral, doctrinal, or other biblical disqualification (1 Timothy 3:1-6¹³¹; Titus 1:7-9¹³²) or failure to fulfill the biblical responsibilities of the office of elder. The elder being considered for removal shall not be entitled to vote as to that decision nor counted as any part of that three-fourths (3/4) required for removal. All elders are subject to the biblical process of Church discipline (Matthew 18:15-20¹³³) and if unresponsive to the correction of the Church will be publicly rebuked in the presence of the entire congregation (1 Timothy 5:19-20¹³⁴).

The board of elders shall consist of men meeting the qualifications of Scripture and appointed as provided herein and in the Church's Doctrine Statement.

B. Pastor-Teacher

The Church, and the elders, shall recognize among themselves those who are set aside for the working at teaching and preaching, termed vocational elders, and those who function as non-vocational elders (1 Timothy 5:17¹³⁵). The vocational elders are those who are employed pastors of the Church. At least one elder shall be designated as the pastor-teacher.

Pastor-teacher is a gifted man for the purpose of perfecting the saints, for the work of the ministry, and edifying the Church (Ephesians 4:11-12¹³⁶). His primary responsibilities are the systematic teaching and preaching of the word of God (1 Timothy 4:13¹³⁷) and to labor in the word and in doctrine (1 Timothy 5:17¹³⁸).

In the event that a new pastor-teacher is needed to serve at the Church, the elders may select a suitable pastoral-teacher. The pastor-teacher must gain unanimous approval from the elders before recommendation to the active members of the Church for affirmation. The elders may recommend only one pastor-teacher to the family of families at a time. The pastoral candidate shall be affirmed by the active membership at a properly convened meeting of the Church, notice of which shall have been given from the pulpit two successive Sundays preceding this meeting. An affirmation of the members to the elders shall be necessary to call and appoint the pastoral candidate. The pastor-teacher shall be free to resign, but shall give a thirty-day written notice to the Church, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon with the remaining elders.

The pastor-teacher's tenure shall be for an indefinite period of time, subject to his ability and availability to serve. In the event the pastor-teacher is unable to carry out his regular assignments, he may at the direction of the other elders, be required to step down from service for a period of time, until he is able again to fulfill his calling.

The pastor-teacher may also be removed from office, in the same manner as the removal of any other elder at any time based upon moral, doctrinal, or other biblical disqualification (1 Timothy 3:1-6¹³⁹; Titus 1:7-9¹⁴⁰) or failure to fulfill the biblical responsibilities of the pastor-teacher. The pastor-teacher is subject to the biblical process of Church discipline (Matthew 18:15-20¹⁴¹) and if unresponsive to the correction of the Church will be publicly rebuked in the presence of the Congregation (1 Timothy 5:19-20¹⁴²).

C. Other Pastoral Staff

Additional and qualified vocational pastoral staff may be added at any time by the unanimous decision of the elders based upon the identified needs and necessary operation of the Church.

D. Officers

The officers of the Church shall be a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary and a Treasurer to fulfill the corporate duties as legislated by the State of Ohio. The Church may also have, at the discretion of the board of elders, other officers as may be from time to time appointed by the elders in accordance with the provisions of this Article.

- The Chairman, a member of the elder board, shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Church and shall, subject to the control of the board of elders, have general supervision, direction and control of the activities and officers of the Church. He shall preside at all meetings of the board of elders, which are to be conducted according to the scriptural principles such as set forth in Philippians 2:2-8¹⁴³ and shall preside at all family meetings. He shall be an ex officio member of all standing committees, if any are appointed, and shall have such other powers and duties as may be prescribed by the board of elders.
- The Vice-Chairman, a member of the elder board, in the absence or disability of the Chairman, shall perform all the duties of the Chairman, and when so acting shall have all the powers of, and be subject to all the restrictions upon, the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed for him by the board of elders.
- The Secretary, a member of the elder board shall keep, or cause to be kept, a book of minutes, at the principal office or such other place as the board of elders may order, of all meetings of the members, the board, its committees and all meetings described in Article V, with the time and place of holding, whether regular or special, and if special, how authorized, the notice thereof given, and the proceedings thereof. The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept, at the principal office the original and a copy of the Constitution of this Church, as amended to date. The Secretary shall give, or cause to be given, notice of all meetings required by this Constitution to be given, and shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as prescribed by the board. The Secretary shall keep, or cause to

be kept at the principal office of the Church, a membership register, showing the names of Church members and their addresses.

- The Treasurer, a member of the elder board, shall ensure the stewardship of the physical and financial resources of the Church, “taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration ... for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Corinthians 8:20-21¹⁴⁴). He shall select "men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3¹⁴⁵) to implement and accomplish this responsibility and shall oversee their work. The Treasurer shall ensure that all financial activities and transactions of the Church are consistent with this Constitution and By-Laws as well as the laws of the State of Ohio. The Treasurer shall keep and maintain, or cause to be kept and maintained, adequate and correct accounts of the properties and business transactions of the Church. The books of account shall at all reasonable times be open to inspection by any elder and the Treasurer shall deposit, or cause to be deposited, all monies and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the Church with such depositories as may be designated by the board of elders. He shall disburse, or cause to be disbursed the funds of the Church as may be ordered by the board of elders, shall render, or cause to be rendered, to the Chairman and the elders, whenever they request it, an account of all the transactions and of the financial condition of the Church, and shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the board of elders.

The officers of this Church shall be chosen on a periodic basis by and shall serve at the pleasure of the board of elders. Each officer shall hold his office until he shall resign, be removed, or become otherwise disqualified to serve, or until his successor shall be elected and qualified. The board of elders shall determine the beginning and length of term of service of all officers.

A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or any other cause shall be filled in the manner as determined by the elders. In the case of absence or inability to act of any officer of the Church and of any person herein authorized to act in his place, the board of elders may from time to time delegate the powers or duties of such officer to any other officer whom the board of elders may select.

E. Deacons

The men who hold this office are to be approved by the elders and recommended to the active members of the Church for affirmation during a service or meeting at any point during the year. Each person who will hold this office shall be put before the congregation for affirmation of his service and commitment to the Church and then at the proper time appointed by the elders.

A deacon shall serve an indefinite period of time, subject to his ability and availability to serve. A deacon who is unable to carry out regular assignments, may at the direction of the board of elders, be required to step down from the office of deacon until he is able to once again fulfill his calling.

A deacon may be removed from office, by the elders in the same manner as the removal of an elder, based upon moral, doctrinal, or other biblical disqualification (1 Timothy 3:7-13¹⁴⁶) or failure to fulfill the biblical responsibilities of the office of deacon.

There shall be no limit to the number of deacons.

Article V. Meetings

Section 1: Types of Meetings

There shall be three types of designated meetings of this Church:

A. Annual Family Meeting

The Annual Family Meeting shall be held during the first quarter of the year or any such other time during the year as the elders may determine. The elders shall be responsible for the selection of the date on which the Annual Family Meeting will be held. Notice of the date of the Annual Family Meeting shall be announced at least two successive Sundays prior to the date. Items to be covered in this meeting shall include, but shall not be limited to, a current financial statement and such other matters as the elders may determine. At the time notice of the meeting is given to the congregation, the congregation may request any other appropriate matters to be discussed at such meetings, subject to approval of the elders. Such matters shall then be addressed at the meeting.

B. Congregational Meetings

Other family meetings may be called at any time deemed necessary by the elders. Notice of the date of any such meeting shall be given prior to the date of such meeting.

C. Elder Meetings

The elders shall meet on a regular basis throughout the year. There will be accurate minutes recorded and approved of each elder meeting. Non-confidential portions of the recorded and approved minutes shall be made available for congregational review.

Article VI. Amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws

The elders shall upon unanimous agreement recommend proposals to alter, amend, or rescind any provision of this Constitution and By-laws at a duly held meeting of the members of the Church. At all times the holy Scriptures are to be the basis for any decision herein.

The presence in person or by absentee ballot of forty percent (40%) of the Church's members who are eligible to affirm shall constitute a quorum at any Church meeting to consider any Constitutional or By-laws amendment. The Secretary shall be responsible for determining the number, which accurately represents the total membership of the Church. For purposes of determining a quorum, those members who are present and those who are absent but have submitted absentee ballots shall be counted.

Any proposal to alter, amend, or rescind any provision of this Constitution and By-laws shall be submitted by any active member of the Church to the elders. The elders shall duly consider any such proposal. If such proposal is approved unanimously by the elders, it will be presented to the members at an appropriate meeting date determined by the elders.

Article VII. Church Records and Reports

Section 1: Records

The Church shall maintain adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of its business and properties. All such books, records, and accounts shall be kept at its principal place of business in the State of Ohio, as fixed by the board of elders from time to time.

Section 2: Inspection of Books and Records

Every elder shall have the absolute right at any reasonable time to inspect all books, records, documents of every kind, and the physical properties of this Church, and also of its subsidiary organizations, if any.

Section 3: Fiscal Year of the Church

The fiscal year of the Church shall begin on the first day of January and end on the last day of December in each year.

Article VIII. Confidentiality of Church Records

Except as provided herein, all members shall have the right, upon adequate notice made to the elders, to inspect Church records in the presence of one or more elders.

No member shall have the right to inspect Church records as to (i) the disciplining of any member; (ii) the hiring or firing of any employee; (iii) the need or problems of any member or employee; (iv) the financial contributions of any member; or (v) any other records which the board of elders may determine in its sole discretion to be in the best interests of the Church to keep confidential.

Article IX. Finances

The Church shall be supported by tithes, offerings, bequests and other gifts given by the congregation and friends and in such other manners as the board of elders may determine. The Church's missions program may also be supported through gifts given over and above the normal tithes and offerings.

Article X. Settlement of Disputes

In any dispute arising between Church members, pastors, or staff pertaining to any matter of spiritual teaching or practices, Church finances, or title to property purchased with Church contributions, the dispute shall be resolved by a consensus of those elders not actively involved in that dispute. A decision shall be reached after prayerful consideration, in a spirit of humility, with each elder regarding one another before himself and striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3¹⁴⁷).

Article XI. Indemnification

The Church shall indemnify and hold harmless to the maximum extent permitted by and according to applicable law any and all officers, elders, deacons, and administrative staff for any expenses and liability actually and necessarily incurred in connection with any action, suit or proceeding against said persons. This indemnification shall include costs and attorney fees. The indemnification shall occur as the expenses are incurred and in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit or proceedings, on receipt of the indemnified person's promise: (1) to repay the amount advanced if proven by clear and convincing evidence in court that the officers', elders', deacons', or administrative staffs' conduct involved a deliberate intent to injure the Church's best interests; (2) and that person's cooperation with the Church in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding.

This indemnification shall be available to any of the above-named persons who is made or thereafter to be made a part to any action, suit or proceeding because of the person's relationship with the Church.

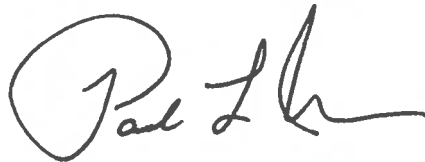
Article XII. Dissolution

In the event of dissolution of this Church, after all debts and obligations are satisfied, no portion of the assets of the Church shall accrue to the personal benefit of any individual. In the event of dissolution, any remaining assets of the Church shall be transferred to such other church or other religious organization as shall be determined by the board of elders, so long as such body is a non-profit entity with similar purposes and is an appropriate entity under applicable laws.

ADOPTED AS OF THIS DATE: October 13, 2024

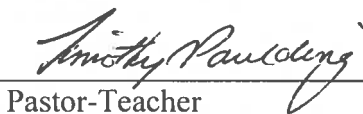
Grace Church of Rootstown

Signature:



Chairman, Board of Elders

Signature:



Pastor-Teacher

¹ **Acts 2:41-47** ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

² **Colossians 1:9-12** ⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

³ **Ephesians 4:11-13** ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

⁴ **Matthew 28:18-20** ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

⁵ **Acts 1:8** ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

⁶ **1 Corinthians 10:31** So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

⁷ **John 1:12** ¹² Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God

⁸ **John 3:16** ⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

⁹ **John 6:37** ³⁷ All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

¹⁰ **Romans 10:9-10** ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

¹¹ **Titus 3:5** ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit

¹² **Ephesians 5:2** ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

¹³ **Colossians 3:14** ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁴ **1 Corinthians 12:25** ²⁵ So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

¹⁵ **Galatians 6:1** ⁶ Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

¹⁶ **Acts 2:42** ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

¹⁷ **1 Timothy 2:1** I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people-

¹⁸ **James 5:16** Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

¹⁹ **Galatians 6:2** Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

²⁰ **Romans 12:15** Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

²¹ **1 Corinthians 12:26** If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²² **Ephesians 4:25, 32** ²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

²³ **Colossians 3:13** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

²⁴ **Matthew 5:23-24** ²³ Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ **1 Corinthians 6:13** You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

²⁶ **2 Timothy 1:14** Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

²⁷ **Matthew 18:15-20** ¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸ "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹" Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

²⁵ **Ephesians 4:13** Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

²⁹ **Matthew 5:16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

³⁰ **Romans 12:6-8**⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

³¹ **1 Corinthians 12:7** Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

³² **1 Peter 4:10** Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

³³ **2 Corinthians 9:7** Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

³⁴ **Deuteronomy 15:11** There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

³⁵ **Galatians 2:10** All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

³⁶ **Philippians 4:15-16**¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.

³⁷ **John 13:34-35** "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

³⁸ **1 Thessalonians 3:12** May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

³⁹ **1 Timothy 2:1** I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people

⁴⁰ **James 5:16** Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

⁴¹ **2 Timothy 2:15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

⁴² **1 Peter 2:2** Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

⁴¹ **Matthew 6:6** But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

⁴⁴ **James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

⁴⁵ **Proverbs 22:6** Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are told they will not turn from it.

⁴⁶ **Ephesians 6:4** Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

⁴⁷ **Colossians 4:5** Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

⁴⁸ **Titus 2:11-12¹¹** For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

⁴⁹ **Titus 3:8** This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

⁵⁰ **1 Peter 2:12** Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

⁵¹ **1 Timothy 2:1-4²** I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— ² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

⁵² **1 Thessalonians 1:7-8** And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. ⁸ The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it.

⁵³ **Matthew 5:16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

⁵⁴ **1 Peter 2:12** Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

⁵⁵ **1 Timothy 2:14** And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

⁵⁶ **1 Thessalonians 4:12** So that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

⁵⁷ **Hebrews 13:7, 17⁷** Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.¹⁷ Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

⁵⁸ **Hebrews 10:24-25²⁴** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

⁵⁹ **Titus 2:2-8** ² Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. ³ Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. ⁶ Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

⁶⁰ **Galatians 6:1** Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

⁶¹ **1 Corinthians 5:6** Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?

⁶² **1 Timothy 5:20** But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.

⁶³ **Matthew 18:15-18** ¹⁵ If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

⁶⁴ **1 Timothy 3:1-7** ¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷ He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

⁶⁵ **Titus 1:6-9** ⁶ An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

⁶⁶ **1 Timothy 3:1** Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

⁶⁷ **1 Timothy 3:2** Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.

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⁹⁰ **1 Timothy 3:6** He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

⁹¹ **1 Timothy 3:7** He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

⁹² **Titus 1:7** Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

⁹³ **Titus 1:8** Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

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⁹⁶ **Titus 1:8** Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

⁹⁷ **Acts 6:4** and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.

⁹⁸ **2 Timothy 2:15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

⁹⁹ **James 5:14** Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.

¹⁰⁰ **Acts 20:28** Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

¹⁰¹ **Acts 20:35** In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

¹⁰² **Hebrews 13:17** Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

¹⁰³ **John 21:17** The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.

¹⁰⁴ **1 Timothy 3:2** Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.

¹⁰⁵ **Titus 1:9** He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

¹⁰⁶ **Acts 20:28-31**²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

¹⁰⁷ **1 Timothy 4:13** Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

¹⁰⁸ **1 Timothy 5:17** The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

⁶⁹ **1 Timothy 3:2** Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.

⁷⁰ **Titus 1:6** An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

⁷¹ **1 Timothy 3:2** Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.

⁷² **1 Timothy 3:2** Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.

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⁷⁸ **Titus 1:9** He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

⁷⁹ **1 Timothy 3:3** not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

⁸⁰ **Titus 1:7** Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

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⁸⁸ **1 Timothy 3:4** He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect.

⁸⁹ **Titus 1:7** Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

¹⁰⁹ **Hebrews 13:7** Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

¹¹⁰ **1 Peter 5:1-3**¹ To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

¹¹ **Hebrews 13:7** Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

¹¹² **1 Timothy 4:6-16**⁶ If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. ⁷ Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. ⁸ For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. ⁹ This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. ¹⁰ That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe. ¹¹ Command and teach these things. ¹² Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. ¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. ¹⁶ Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

¹¹³ **2 Corinthians 2:4** For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

¹¹⁴ **Acts 20:28** Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

¹¹⁵ **Acts 15:22** Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers.

¹¹⁶ **1 Timothy 3:1,4, 5, 4:14, 5:17** Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ¹⁴ Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁷ The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

¹¹⁷ **Titus 1:7** Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

¹¹⁸ **1 Peter 5:1-2**¹ To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve.

¹¹⁹ **1 Thessalonians 5:14** And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

¹²⁰ **Acts 20:28** Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

¹²¹ **Acts 15** Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into

sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ³ The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? "No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. ¹³ When they finished, James spoke up. "Brothers," he said, "listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. ¹⁵ The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

¹⁶ "After this I will return
and rebuild David's fallen tent.
Its ruins I will rebuild,
and I will restore it,
¹⁷ that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
even all the Gentiles who bear my name,
says the Lord, who does these things' -
¹⁸ things known from long ago.

¹⁹ "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. ²¹ For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

²² Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers. ²³ With them they sent the following letter:

The apostles and elders, your brothers,
To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:

Greetings.

²⁴ We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵ So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. ²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.

³⁰ So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. ³¹ The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. ³² Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. ³³ After spending some time there, they were

sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. ^{34 35} But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

³⁶ Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” ³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, ³⁸ but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. ³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

¹²² **1 Timothy 3:1** Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

¹²³ **1 Peter 5:1-3**¹ To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them— not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

¹²⁴ **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**¹² Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

¹²⁵ **1 Timothy 3:8-13**⁸ In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹ They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. ¹¹ In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. ¹² A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³ Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

¹²⁶ **1 Timothy 3:1** Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

¹²⁷ **1 Timothy 3:1-6** Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

¹²⁸ **Titus 1:7-9** Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

¹²⁹ **1 Timothy 3:10, 5:22**¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

¹³⁰ **1 Timothy 5:18-20**¹⁸ For Scripture says, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain” and “The worker deserves his wages.” ¹⁹ Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. ²⁰ But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.

¹³¹ **1 Timothy 3:1-6**¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

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¹³³ **Matthew 18:15-20**¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

¹³⁴ **1 Timothy 5:19-20**¹⁹ Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. ²⁰ But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.

¹³⁵ **1 Timothy 5:17** The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

¹³⁶ **Ephesians 4:11-12**¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

¹³⁷ **1 Timothy 4:13** Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

¹³⁸ **1 Timothy 5:17** The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

¹³⁹ **1 Timothy 3:1-6**¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

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¹⁴³ **Philippians 2:2-8**² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

¹⁴⁴ **2 Corinthians 8:20-21**²⁰ We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. ²¹ For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.

¹⁴⁵ **Acts 6:3** Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.

¹⁴⁶ **1 Timothy 3:7- 13**⁷ He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. ⁸ In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹ They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. ¹¹ In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. ¹² A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³ Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

¹⁴⁷ **Ephesians 4:1-3**¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.