

**Confessional Standards and Bylaws**  
**Grace Reformed Church**

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## **CONFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND BYLAWS OF GRACE REFORMED CHURCH**

Unanimously adopted in a regular meeting of the members of Grace Reformed Church on  
7 January 2024.

### **Preamble**

WHEREAS, it is the express purpose of God the Father to call out of the world a saved people to worship the Son, Jesus Christ, and contribute to the Body of Christ, built and established on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone.

WHEREAS, the members of the Body of Christ are commanded to assemble themselves together for the reading of Holy Scripture, the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the offering of prayer, the preaching of the Word, the presentation of offerings, observing the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the work of ministry, and the proclaiming of the Gospel, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that we recognize ourselves as a body of Christian believers working together for the common purpose of exalting the glory of Christ, proclaiming His gospel, and that under the laws of the state of Texas we may exercise all the rights and privileges granted to religious bodies.

### **Language**

The masculine gender stated within this document shall refer to both men and women, unless otherwise clearly specified to refer only to men.

### **Article I. Name**

The name of this church shall be Grace Reformed Church.

### **Article II. Purpose**

The purpose of Grace Reformed Church is to glorify God by establishing a body of believers whose greatest desire is to fulfill the two great commandments—loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. This is done by striving to live in obedience to Holy Scripture, the faithful preaching and teaching of God's word, practicing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, worshipping God in corporate worship as prescribed by His word, praying for one another and for the world, encouraging one another through the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, ministering to the needs of the saints and the lost, and seeking to advance God's kingdom in the world through the proclaiming of the gospel. (Dt. 12:29-32; Mtt. 22:36-40; 26:26-29; 28:19-20; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22:14-23; Jn. 14:15; Acts 4:32-37; 1 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:18-21; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; 3:14-15; 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:1-2)

Grace Reformed Church is organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3), Publication 1828 of the Internal Revenue Code.

### **Article III. Statement of Faith**

#### *The 1646 First London Baptist Confession of Faith*

The first edition was published in 1644. This second edition "corrected and enlarged" was originally published in 1646.

A confession of faith of seven congregations or churches of Christ in London, which are commonly, but unjustly called Anabaptists; published for the vindication of the truth and information of the ignorant; likewise for the taking off those aspersions which are frequently, both in pulpit and print, unjustly cast upon them. Printed at London, Anno 1646.

#### **I. God**

The Lord our God is but one God, whose subsistence is in Himself; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto; who is in Himself most holy, every way infinite, in greatness, wisdom, power, love, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; who giveth being, moving, and preservation to all creatures. (1 Cor. 8:6, Isa. 44:6, 46:9, Exod. 3:14, 1 Tim 6:16, Isa. 43:15; Ps. 147:5, Deut. 32:3; Job 36:5; Jer. 10:12, Exod. 34:6,7, Acts 17:28; Rom. 11:36)

#### **II. The Trinity**

In this divine and infinite Being there is the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; each having the whole divine Essence, yet the Essence undivided; all infinite without any beginning, therefore but one God; who is not to be divided in nature, and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties. (1 Cor. 1:3; John 1:1, 15:26, Exod. 3:14; 1 Cor. 8:6)

#### **III. God's Sovereignty**

God had decreed in Himself, before the world was, concerning all things, whether necessary, accidental or voluntary, with all the circumstances of them, to work, dispose, and bring about all things according to the counsel of His own will, to His glory: (Yet without being the [chargeable] author of sin, or having fellowship with any therein) in which appears His wisdom in disposing all things, unchangeableness, power, and faithfulness in accomplishing His decree: And God hath before the foundation of the world, foreordained some men to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of His grace; [having foreordained and] leaving the rest in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of His justice. (Isa. 46:10; Eph. 1:11, Rom. 11:33, Ps. 115:3; 135:6, 33:15; 1 Sam. 10:9, 26, Prov. 21:6; Exod. 21:13; Prov. 16:33, Ps. 144, Isa. 45:7, Jer. 14:22, Matt. 6:28, 30; Col. 1:16, 17; Num. 23:19, 20; Rom. 3:4; Jer. 10:10; Eph. 1:4,5; Jude 4, 6; Prov. 16:4)

#### **IV. The Fall of Man**

In the beginning God made all things very good; created man after His own image, filled with all meet perfection of nature, and free from all sin; but long he abode not in this honor; Satan using the subtlety of the serpent to seduce first Eve, then by her seducing Adam; who without any compulsion, in eating the forbidden fruit, transgressed the command of God, and fell, whereby death came upon all his posterity; who now are conceived in sin, and by nature the children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subject of death, and other miseries in this world, and for ever,

unless the Lord Jesus Christ set them free. (Gen. 1:1, Col. 1:16, Isa. 45:12, 1 Cor. 15:45, 46; Eccles. 7:29; Gen. 3:1,4,5; 2 Cor. 11:3, 1 Tim. 2:14; Gal. 3:22; Rom. 5:12, 18, 19, 6:22; Eph. 2:3)

#### V. Providence

God in His infinite power and wisdom, doth dispose all things to the end for which they were created; that neither good nor evil befalls any by chance, or without His providence; and that whatsoever befalls the elect, is by His appointment, for His glory, and their good. (Job 38:11; Isa. 46:10,11, Eccles. 3:14, Mark 10:29,30; Exod. 21:13; Prov. 16:33, Rom. 8:28)

#### VI. Regeneration

All the elect being loved of God with an everlasting love, are redeemed, quickened, and saved, not by themselves, nor their own works, lest any man should boast, but, only and wholly by God, of His own free grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ, who is made unto us by God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and all in all, that he that rejoices, might rejoice in the Lord. (Jer. 31:2; Eph. 1:3, 7, 2:8,9; 1 Thess. 5:9, Acts 13:48; 2 Cor. 5:21; Jer. 9:23,24; 1 Cor. 1:30,31; Jer. 23:6)

#### VII. Eternal Life

And this is life eternal, that we might know Him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. And on the contrary, the Lord will render vengeance, in flaming fire, to them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ. (John 17:3; Heb. 5:9, 2 Thess. 1:8; John 6:36)

#### VIII. The Scriptures

The rule of this knowledge, faith, and obedience, concerning the worship of God, in which is contained the whole duty of man, is (not men's laws, or unwritten traditions, but) only the word of God contained [viz., written] in the holy Scriptures; in which is plainly recorded whatsoever is needful for us to know, believe, and practice; which are the only rule of holiness and obedience for all saints, at all times, in all places to be observed. (Col. 2:23; Matt 15:6,9; John 5:39, 2 Tim. 3:15,16,17; Isa. 8:20; Gal. 1:8,9; Acts 3:22,23)

#### IX. God the Son

The Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Moses and the Prophets wrote, the Apostles preached, He is the Son of God, the brightness of His glory, etc. by whom He made the world; who upholds and governs all things that He hath made; who also when the fulness of time was come, was made of a woman, of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David; to wit, of the virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her, the power of the most High overshadowing her; and He was also tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Gen. 3:15, 22:18, 49:10; Dan. 7:13, 9:24, etc.; Prov. 8:23; John 1:1,2,3; Heb. 1:8; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 7:14; Rev. 5:5; Gen. 49:9,10, Rom. 1:3, 9:10; Matt. 1:16; Luke 3:23,26; Heb. 2:16; Isa. 53:3,4,5; Heb. 4:15)

#### X. Christ as Mediator

Jesus Christ is made the mediator of the new and everlasting covenant of grace between God and man, ever to be perfectly and fully the prophet, priest, and king of the Church of God for evermore. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15; John 14:6; Isa. 9:6.7)

#### XI. Eternal Decree of Christ's Mediatorship

Unto this office He was appointed by God from everlasting; and in respect of his manhood, from the womb called, separated, and anointed most fully and abundantly with all gifts necessary, God having without measure poured out His Spirit upon Him. (Prov. 8:23; Isa. 42:6, 49:15; 11:2,3,4,5, 61:1,2; Luke 4:17, 22; John 1:14, 26, 3:34)

#### XII. Christ's Work as Mediator

Concerning His mediatorship, the Scripture holds forth Christ's call to His office; for none takes this honor upon Him, but He that is called of God as was Aaron, it being an action of God, whereby a special promise being made, He ordains His Son to this office; which promise is, that Christ should be made a sacrifice for sin; that He should see His seed, and prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand; all of mere free and absolute grace towards God's elect, and without any condition foreseen in them to procure it. (Heb. 5:4,5,6, Isa. 53:10,11; John 3:16; Rom. 8:32)

#### XIII. Eternality of Christ's Office

This office to be mediator, that is, to be prophet, priest, and king of the Church of God, is so proper to Christ, that neither in whole, or any part thereof, it cannot be transferred from Him to any other. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:24; Dan. 7:14; Acts 4:12; Luke 1:33; John 14:6)

#### XIV. Threefold Offices of Christ

This office to which Christ is called, is threefold; a prophet, priest, and king: This number and order of offices is necessary, for in respect of our ignorance, we stand in need of His prophetic office; in respect of our great alienation from God, we need His priestly office to reconcile us; and in respect of our averseness and utter inability to return to God, we need His kingly office, to convince, subdue, draw, uphold and preserve us to His heavenly kingdom. (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22,23; Heb. 3:1; 4:14,15; Ps. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:20; Acts 26:18; Col. 1:21; John 16:8, Ps. 110:3; Song of Sol. 1:3; John 6:44; Phil. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:18)

#### XV. Christ, the Wisdom of God

Concerning the prophecy of Christ, it is that whereby He hath revealed the will of God, whatsoever is needful for His servants to know and obey; and therefore He is called not only a prophet and doctor, and the apostle of our profession, and the angel of the covenant, but also the very wisdom of God, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who for ever continues revealing the same truth of the gospel to His people. (John 1:18; 12:49,50; 17:8; Deut. 18:15; Matt. 23:10; Heb. 3:1; Mal. 3:1; 1 Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:3)

#### XVI. Christ as the God-Man

That He might be a prophet every way complete, it was necessary He should be God, and also that He should be man; For unless He had been God, He could never have perfectly understood the will of God; and unless He had been man, He could not suitably have unfolded it in His own person to men. (John 1:18; Acts 3:22; Deut. 18:15; Heb. 1:1)

Note: That Jesus Christ is God is wonderfully and clearly expressed in the Scriptures. He is called the mighty God, Isa. 9:6. That Word was God, John 1:1. Christ, who is God over all, Rom 9:5. God manifested in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3:16. The same is very God, 1 John

5:20. He is the first, Rev. 1:8. He gives being to all things, and without Him was nothing made, John 1:2. He forgives sins, Matt. 9:6. He is before Abraham, John 8:58. He was and is, and ever will be the same, Heb. 13:8. He is always with His to the end of the world, Matt. 28:20. Which could not be said of Jesus Christ, if He were not God. And to the Sone He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, Heb. 1:8, John 1:18.

Also, Christ is not only perfectly God, but perfect man, made of a woman, Gal. 4:4. Made of the seed of David, Rom 1:3. Coming out of the loins of David, Acts 2:30. Of Jesse and Judah, Acts 13:23. In that the children were partakers of flesh and blood He Himself likewise took part with them, Heb. 2:14. He took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, verse 16. So that we are bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh, Eph. 5:30. So that He that sanctifies, and they that are sanctified are all of one, Heb.2:11. See Acts 3:22, Deut. 18:15; Heb. 1:1.

#### XVII. Christ as Priest

Concerning His priesthood, Christ having sanctified Himself, hath appeared once to put away sin by that one offering of Himself a sacrifice for sin, by which He hath fully finished and suffered all things God required for the salvation of His elect, and removed all rites and shadows, etc. and is now entered within the vail into the holy of holies, which is the presence of God. Also, He makes His people a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God through Him. Neither doth the Father accept, nor Christ offer to the Father, any other worship or worshippers. (John 17:19; Heb. 5:7,8,9,10,12; Rom. 5:19, Eph. 5:2; Col. 1:20; Eph. 2:14, etc.; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24; 8:1; 1 Pet. 2:5; John 4:23,24)

#### XVIII. Eternal Priesthood of Christ

This priesthood was not legal or temporary, but according to the order of Melchisedec, and is stable and perfect, not for a time, but forever, which is suitable to Jesus Christ, as to Him that ever lives. Christ was the priest, sacrifice, and altar: He was a priest according to both natures; He was a sacrifice according to His human nature; whence in Scripture it is attributed to His body, to His blood: Yet the effectualness of this sacrifice did depend upon His divine nature; therefore it is called the blood of God. He was the altar according to His divine nature, it belonging to the altar to sanctify that which is offered upon it, and so it ought to be of greater dignity than the sacrifice itself. (Heb. 7:16, etc.; Heb. 5:6, 10:10; 1 Pet. 1:18,19; Col. 1:20, 22; Heb. 9:13; Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:14, 13:10,12,15; Matt. 23:17; John 17:19)

#### XIX. Christ as King

Concerning His kingly office, Christ being risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and having all power in heaven and earth, He doth spiritually govern His church, and doth exercise His power over all, angels and men, good and bad, to the preservation and salvation of the elect, and to the overruling and destruction of His enemies. By this kingly power He applies the benefits, virtue, and fruits of His prophecy and priesthood to His elect, subduing their sins, preserving and strengthening them in all their conflicts against Satan, the world, and the flesh, keeping their hearts in faith and filial fear by His Spirit: By this His mighty power He rules the vessels of wrath, using, limiting and restraining them, as it seems good to His infinite wisdom. (1 Cor. 15:4; 1 Pet. 3:21,22; Matt. 28:18,19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:1, 5:30,31; John 19:36; Rom.

14:9; John 5:26,27; Rom. 5:6,7,8; 14:17; Gal. 5:22,23; Mark 1:27; Heb. 1:14; John 16:15; Job 2:8; Rom. 1:21, [9:17-18]; Eph. 4:17,18; 2 Pet. 2)

#### XX. The Return of the King

This His kingly power shall be more fully manifested when He shall come in glory to reign among His saints, when He shall put down all rule and authority under His feet, that the glory of the Father may be perfectly manifested in His Son, and the glory of the Father and the Son in all His members. (1 Cor. 15:24,28; Heb. 9:28; 2 Thess. 1:9,10; 1 Thess. 4:15,16,17; John 17:21, 26)

#### XXI. Election

Jesus Christ by His death did purchase salvation for the elect that God gave unto Him: These only have interest in Him, and fellowship with Him, for whom He makes intercession to His Father in their behalf, and to them alone doth God by His Spirit apply this redemption; as also the free gift of eternal life is given to them, and none else. (Eph. 1:14; Heb. 5:9; Matt. 1:21; John 17:6; Heb. 7:25; 1 Cor. 2:12; Rom. 8:29,30; 1 John 5:12; John 15:13, 3:16)

#### XXII. Saving Faith

Faith is the gift of God, wrought in the hearts of the elect by the Spirit of God; by which faith they come to know and believe the truth of the Scriptures, and the excellency of them above all other writings, and all things in the world, as they hold forth the glory of God in His attributes, the excellency of Christ in His nature and offices, and of the power and fulness of the Spirit in its [His] workings and operations; and so are enabled to cast their souls upon His truth thus believed. (Eph. 2:8; John 6:29, 4:10; Phil. 1:29; Gal. 5:22; John 17:17; Heb. 4:11,12; John 6:63)

#### XXIII. Perseverance of the Saints

All those that have this precious faith wrought in them by the Spirit, can never finally nor totally fall away; seeing the gifts of God are without repentance; so that He still begets and nourishes in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit unto immortality; and though many storms and floods arise, and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock, which by faith they are fastened upon; not withstanding, through unbelief, and the temptations of Satan, the sensible sight of this light and love, be clouded and overwhelmed for a time; yet God is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto salvation, where they shall enjoy their purchased possession, they being engraved upon the palms of His hands, and their names having been written in the book of life from all eternity. (Matt. 7:24,25; John 13:10, 10:28,29; 1 Pet. 1:4,5,6; Isa. 49:13,14,15,16)

#### XXIV. Power of the Gospel

Faith is ordinarily begotten by the preaching of the gospel, or word of Christ, without respect to any power or agency in the creature; but it being wholly passive, and dead in trespasses and sins, doth believe and is converted by no less power than that which raised Christ from the dead. (Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:28; Rom. 9:16; Ezek. 16:16; Rom. 3:12, 1:16; Eph. 1:19, Col. 2:12)

#### XXV. Free Offer of Salvation

The preaching of the gospel to the conversion of sinners, is absolutely free; no way requiring as absolutely necessary, any qualifications, preparations, or terrors of the law, or preceding ministry of the law, but only and alone the naked soul, a sinner and ungodly, to receive Christ crucified,



dead and buried, and risen again; who is made a prince and a Savior for such sinners as through the gospel shall be brought to believe on Him. (John 3:14,15, 1:12; Isa. 55:1; John 7:37; 1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 4:5, 5:8; Acts 5:30,31, 2:36, 1 Cor. 1:22,24)

#### XXVI. Sufficiency of God's Grace

The same power that converts to faith in Christ, carries on the soul through all duties, temptations, conflicts, sufferings; and whatsoever a believer is, he is by grace, and is carried on in all obedience and temptations by the same. (1 Pet. 1:5, 2 Cor. 12:9, 1 Cor. 15:10; Phil. 2:12, 13; John 15:5; Gal. 2:19,20)

#### XXVII. Union with God

All believers are by Christ united to God; by which union, God is one with them, and they are one with Him; and that all believers are the sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ, to whom belong all the promises of this life, and that which is to come. (1 Thess. 1:1; John 17:21, 20:17; Heb. 2:11, 1 John 4:16; Gal. 2:19,20)

#### XXVIII. Justification

Those that have union with Christ, are justified from all their sins by the blood of Christ, which justification is a gracious and full acquittance of a guilty sinner from all sin, by God, through the satisfaction that Christ hath made by His death for all their sins, and this applied (in manifestation of it) through faith. (1 John 1:7; Heb. 10:14, 9:26; 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 3:23; Acts 13:38,39; Rom. 5:1, 3:25,30)

#### XXIX. One Holy Nation

All believers are a holy and sanctified people, and that sanctification is a spiritual grace of the new covenant, and an effect of the love of God manifested in the soul, whereby the believer presses after a heavenly and evangelical obedience to all the commands, which Christ as head and king in His new covenant hath prescribed to them. (1 Cor. 12; 1 Pet. 2:9; Eph. 1:4; 1 John 4:16; Matt. 28:20)

#### XXX. Peace with God

All believers through the knowledge of that justification of life given by the Father and brought forth by the blood of Christ have as their great privilege of that new covenant, peace with God, reconciliation, whereby they that were afar off are made nigh by that blood, and have peace passing all understanding; yea, joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received atonement. (2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5:9,10; Isa. 54:10; Eph. 2:13,14, 4:7; Rom. 5:10,11)

#### XXXI. Spiritual Warfare

All believers in the time of this life, are in a continual warfare and combat against sin, self, the world, and the devil; and are liable to all manner of afflictions, tribulations and persecutions, being predestined and appointed thereunto, and whatsoever the saints possess or enjoy of God spiritually, is by faith; and outward and temporal things are lawfully enjoyed by a civil right by them who have no faith. (Rom. 7:23,24; Eph. 6:10,11, etc.; Heb. 2:9,10, 2 Tim. 3:12; Rom. 8:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; Gal. 2:19,20; 2 Cor. 5:7; Deut. 2:5)

### XXXII. Strength for the Christian Life

The only strength by which the saints are enabled to encounter with all oppositions and trials, is only by Jesus Christ, who is the captain of their salvation, being made perfect through sufferings; who hath engaged His faithfulness and strength to assist them in all their afflictions, and to uphold them in all their temptations, and to preserve them by His power to His everlasting kingdom. (John 16:33, 15:5; Phil. 4:11, Heb. 2:9,10; 2 Tim. 4:18)

### XXXIII. One Church, One People, One Kingdom

Jesus Christ hath here on earth a [manifestation of His] spiritual kingdom, which is His Church, whom He hath purchased and redeemed to Himself as a peculiar inheritance; which Church is a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world by the word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of faith of the gospel, being baptized into that faith, and joined to the Lord, and each other, by mutual agreement in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances commanded by Christ their head and king. (Matt. 11:11; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Rom. 1:7; Acts 19:8,9, 26:18; 2 Cor. 6:17; Rev. 18:4; Acts 2:37, 10:37; Rom. 10:10; Matt. 18:19,20; Acts 2:42, 9:26; 1 Pet. 2:5)

### XXXIV. Christ's Covenant with His Church

To this Church He hath made His promises, and giveth the signs of His covenant, presence, acceptance, love, blessing and protection. Here are the fountains and springs of His heavenly graces flowing forth to refresh and strengthen them. (Matt. 28:18, etc.; 1 Cor. 11:24, 3:21; 2 Cor. 6:18; Rom. 9:4,5; Ps. 133:3; Rom. 3:7,10; Ezek. 47:2)

### XXXV. The Body of Christ

And all His servants of all estates (are to acknowledge Him to be their prophet, priest and king;) and called thither to be enrolled among His household servants, to present their bodies and souls, and to bring their gifts God hath given them, to be under His heavenly conduct and government, to lead their lives in this walled sheepfold, and watered garden, to have communion here with His saints, that they may be assured that they are made meet to be partakers of their inheritance in the kingdom of God; and to supply each others wants, inward and outward; (and although each person hath a propriety in his own estate, yet they are to supply each others wants, according as their necessities shall require, that the name of Jesus Christ may not be blasphemed through the necessity of any in the Church) and also being come, they are here by Himself to be bestowed in their several order, due place, peculiar use, being fitly compact and knit together according to the effectual working of every part, to the edifying of itself in love. (Acts. 2:41,47; Isa. 4:3, 1 Cor. 12:6,7, etc.; Ezek. 20:37,40; Song of Sol. 4:12; Eph. 2:19; Rom. 12:4,5,6; Col. 1:12, 2:5,6,19; Acts 20:32, 5:4, 2:44,45, 4:34,35; Luke 14:26; 1 Tim. 6:1; Eph. 4:16)

### XXXVI. Autonomy of the Church

Being thus joined, every [local] church hath power given them from Christ, for their wellbeing, to choose among themselves meet persons for elders and deacons, being qualified according to the word, as those which Christ hath appointed in His testament, for the feeding, governing, serving, and building up of His Church; and that none have any power to impose on them either these or any other. (Acts 1:23,26, 6:3, 15:22,25; Rom. 12:7,8; 1 Tim. 3:2,6,7; 1 Cor. 12:8,28; Heb. 13:7,17; 1 Pet. 5:1,2,3,4:15)

### XXXVII. Duty of Ministers to the Church

That the ministers lawfully called, as aforesaid, ought to continue in their calling and place according to God's ordinance, and carefully to feed the flock of God committed to them, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. (Heb. 5:4; John 10:3,4; Acts 20:28,29; Rom. 12:7,8; Heb. 13:7,17; 1 Pet. 5:1,2,3)

### XXXVIII. Duty of the Church to Ministers

The ministers of Christ ought to have whatsoever they shall need, supplied freely by the church, that according to Christ's ordinance they that preach the Gospel should live of the gospel by the law of Christ. (1 Cor. 9:7,14; Gal. 6:8; Phil. 4:15,16; 2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Tim. 1:2; Ps. 110:3)

### XXXIX. Baptism

Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, given by Christ, to be dispensed upon persons professing faith, or that are made disciples; who upon profession of faith, ought to be baptized, and after to partake of the Lord's Supper. (Matt. 28:18,19; John 4:1; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:37,38, 8:36,37, etc.)

### XL. Mode and Symbolism of Baptism

That the way and manner of dispensing this ordinance, is dipping or plunging the body under water; it being a sign, must answer the things signified, which is, that interest the saints have in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ: And that as certainly as the body is buried under water, and risen again, so certainly shall the bodies of the saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of the resurrection, to reign with Christ. (Matt. 3:16; Mark 15:9 reads [into Jordan] in Greek; John 3:23, Acts 8:38; Rev. 1:5, 7:14; Heb. 10:22; Rom. 6:3,4,5,6; 1 Cor. 15:28,29. The [Greek] word *baptizo* signifies to dip or plunge [yet so as convenient garments be both upon the administrator and subject with all modesty])

### XLI. Dispensing the Ordinance of Baptism

The person designed by Christ to dispense baptism, the Scripture holds forth to be a disciple; it being no where tied to a particular church officer, or person extraordinarily sent the commission enjoining the administration, being given to them as considered disciples, being men able to preach the gospel. (Isa. 8:16; Eph. 2:7; Matt 28:19; John 4:2; Acts 20:7, 11:10; 1 Cor. 11:2, 10:16,17; Rom. 16:2; Matt. 18:17)

### XLII. Church Discipline

Christ hath likewise given power to His Church to receive in, and cast out, any member that deserves it; and this power is given to every congregation, and not to one particular person, either member or officer, but in relation to the whole body, in reference to their faith and fellowship. (Rom. 15:2; Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4,11,14, 12:6, 2:3; 2 Cor. 2:6,7)

### XLIII. Subjects of Church Discipline

And every particular member of each church, how excellent, great, or learned soever, is subject to this censure and judgment; and that the church ought not without great care and tenderness, and due advice, but by the rule of faith, to proceed against her members. (Matt. 18:16-18; 17:18; Acts 11:2,3; 1 Tim. 5:19, etc.; Col. 4:17; Acts 15:1-3)

#### XLIV. Mutual Accountability

Christ for the keeping of this church in holy and orderly communion, places some special men over the church; who by their office, are to govern, oversee, visit, watch; so likewise for the better keeping thereof, in all places by the members, He hath given authority, and laid duty upon all to watch over one another. (Acts 20:27,28; Heb. 13:17,24; Matt. 24:45; 1 Thess. 5:2, 14; Jude 3,20; Heb. 10:34,35 [cf. 24,25], 12:15)

#### XLV. Primary Duty of Ministers

Also such to whom God hath given gifts in the church, may and ought to prophecy [viz., teach] according to the proportion of faith, and to teach publicly the word of God, for the edification, exhortation, and comfort of the church. (1 Cor. 14:3, etc.; Rom 12:6; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11; 1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Thess. 5:19, etc.)

#### XLVI. Unity in Diversity

Thus being rightly gathered, and continuing in the obedience of the gospel of Christ, none are to separate for faults and corruptions (for as long as the church consists of men subject to failings, there will be difference in the true constituted church) until they have in due order, and tenderness, sought redress thereof. (Rev. 2, 3; Acts 15:12; 1 Cor. 1:10; Heb. 10:25; Jude 19; Rev. 2:20,21,27; Acts 15:1,2; Rom. 14:1; 15:1,2,3)

#### XLVII. Church Associations

And although the particular congregations be distinct, and several bodies, every one as a compact and knit city within itself; yet are they all to walk by one rule of truth; so also they (by all means convenient) are to have the counsel and help one of another, if necessity require it, as members of one body, in the common faith, under Christ their head. (1 Cor. 4:17, 14:33,36, 16:1; Ps. 122:3; Eph. 2:12,19; Rev. 21; 1 Tim. 3:15, 6:13,14; 1 Cor. 4:17; Acts 15:2,3; Song of Sol. 8:8,9; 2 Cor. 8:1,4, 13:14)

#### XLVIII. Civil Government

A civil magistracy is an ordinance of God, set up by Him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well; and that in all lawful things, commanded by them, subjection ought to be given by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake; and that we are to make supplications and prayers for kings, and all that are in authority, that under them we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. (Rom. 13:1,2, etc.; 1 Pet. 2:13,14; 1 Tim. 2:1,2,3)

Note: The supreme magistracy of this kingdom we acknowledge to be the king and parliament (now established) freely chosen by the kingdom, and that we are to maintain and defend all civil laws and civil officers made by them, which are for the good of the commonwealth. And we acknowledge with thankfulness, that God hath made this present king and parliament honorable in throwing down the prelatial hierarchy, because of their tyranny and oppression over us, under which this kingdom long groaned, for which we are ever engaged to bless God, and honor them for the same. And concerning the worship of God; there is but one lawgiver, which is able to save and destroy, James 4:12; which is Jesus Christ, who hath given laws and rules sufficient in His word for His worship; and for any to make more, were to charge Christ with want of wisdom, or faithfulness, or

both, in not making laws enough, or not good enough for His house: Surely it is our wisdom, duty, and privilege, to observe Christ's laws only, Ps 2:6,9,10,12. So it is the magistrates duty to tender the liberty of mens' consciences, Eccles. 8:8 (which is the tenderest thing unto all conscientious men, and most dear unto them, and without which all other liberties will not be worth the naming, much less enjoying) and to protect all under them from all wrong, injury, oppression and molestation; so it is our duty not to be wanting in nothing which is for their honor and comfort, and whatsoever is for the wellbeing of the commonwealth wherein we live; it is our duty to do, and we believe it to be our express duty, especially in matters of religion, to be fully persuaded in our minds of the lawfulness of what we do, as knowing whatsoever is not of faith is sin. And as we cannot do anything contrary to our understandings and consciences, so neither can we forebear the doing of that which our understandings and consciences bind us to do. And if the magistrate should require us to do otherwise, we are to yield our persons in a passive way to their power, as the saints of old have done, James 5:4. And thrice happy shall he be, that shall lose his life for witnessing (though but for the least tittle) of the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 5; Gal. 5.

#### XLIX. Civil Disobedience

But in case we find not the magistrate [or governing authority] to favor us herein; yet we dare not suspend our practice, because we believe we ought to go in obedience to Christ, in professing the faith which was once delivered to the saints, which faith is declared in the holy Scriptures, and this our confession of faith a part of them, and that we are to witness to the truth of the Old and New Testaments unto the death, if necessity require, in the midst of all trials and afflictions, as His saints of old have done; not accounting our goods, lands, wives, children, fathers, mothers, brethren, sisters; yea and our own lives dear unto us, so we may finish our course with joy; remembering always, that we ought to obey God rather than men, who will when we have finished our course, and kept the faith, give us the crown of righteousness; to whom we must give an account of all our actions, and no man being able to discharge us of the same. (Acts 2:40,41, 4:19, 5:28,29, 20:23; 1 Thess. 3:3; Phil. 1:28,29; Dan. 3:16,17, 6:7,10,22,23; 1 Tim. 6:13,14; Rom. 12:1,8; 1 Cor. 14:37; Rev. 2:20; 2 Tim. 4:6,7,8; Rom. 14:10, 12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Ps. 49:7,50:22)

#### L. Civic Duty

It is lawful for a Christian to be a magistrate or civil officer; and also it is lawful to take an oath, so it be in truth, and in judgment, and in righteousness, for confirmation of truth, and ending of all strife; and that by wrath and vain oaths the Lord is provoked and this land mourns. (Acts 8:38, 10:1,2,35; Rom. 16:23; Deut. 6:13; Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 10,11; Jer. 4:2; Heb. 6:16)

#### LI. The Golden Rule

We are to give unto all men whatsoever is their due, as their place, age, estate, requires; and that we defraud no man of anything, but to do unto all men, as we would they should do unto us. (1 Thess. 4:6; Rom. 13:5,6,7; Matt. 22:21; Titus 3; 1 Pet. 2:15,17, 5:5; Eph. 5:21,23, etc. , 6:1,9; Titus 3:1,2,3)

### LII. Future Resurrection

There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, and everyone shall give an account of himself to God, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that [which] he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (Acts 24:15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12.

[Matt. 25; Rev. 22:11-15])

### The Conclusion

Thus we desire to give unto Christ that which is His; and unto all lawful authority that which is their due; and to owe nothing to any man but love; to live quietly and peaceably, as it becometh saints, endeavoring in all things to keep a good conscience, and to do unto every man (of what judgment soever) as we would they should do unto us, that as our practice is, so it may prove us to be a conscionable [viz., reasonable], quiet, and harmless people (no ways dangerous or troublesome to human society) and to labor and work with our hands that we may not be chargeable to any, but to give to him that [is in] need, both friends and enemies, accounting it more excellent to give than to receive. Also we confess, that we know but in part, and that we are ignorant of many things which we desire and seek to know; and if any shall do us that friendly part to show us from the word of God that which we see not, we shall have cause to be thankful to God and them; but if any man shall impose upon us anything that we see not to be commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ, we should in His strength rather embrace all reproaches and tortures of men, to be stripped of all outward comforts, and if it were possible, to die a thousand deaths, rather than to do anything against the least tittle of the truth of God or against the light of our own consciences. And if any shall call what we have said heresy, then do we with the Apostle acknowledge, that after the way they call heresy, worship we the God of our fathers, disclaiming all heresies (rightly so called) because they are against Christ, and to be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in obedience to Christ, as knowing our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

### Psalm 74:21,22

Arise, O God, plead thine own cause; remember how the foolish man blasphemeth Thee daily. O let not the oppressed return ashamed, but let the poor and needy praise Thy name.

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

### **Article IV. Holy Scripture**

In addition to Article VIII of The First London Baptist Confession of Faith (1646), we affirm the Chicago Statement of Faith on Biblical Inerrancy (1978). See Appendix A.

### **Article V. Ordinances**

#### **Baptism**

Baptism is the public immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Along with the Lord's Supper, baptism is a sign and seal of the New Covenant. (Mtt 28:19; Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:11-12; Acts 2:41; 8:12; 9:18; 10:44-48; 16:14-15)

## **The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is an act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, commune with the risen Christ in a spiritual but real sense. The Lord's Supper, along with baptism, is a sign and seal of the New Covenant which the Lord Jesus Christ inaugurated in his death, burial and resurrection. The elements of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine represent his sinless body which was given as a "ransom for many," and his blood which was shed for the forgiveness of sin. Thus, it should be taken only by those who have professed saving faith in Christ and have demonstrated that faith in obedience to baptism. In accordance with Scripture, believers should examine themselves to ensure they are in the faith, confessing their sins to God. Consequently, the table should be fenced with a word of warning to the congregation. In standing with the tradition of the New Testament church, the Lord's Supper should be a regular part of Lord's Day worship. (Mtt 26:26-29; Lk 22:14-23; 1 Cor 11:23-32)

## **Article VI. Marriage, Family, and Sexuality**

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way Christ relates to his Church. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for his wife, to protect her, and to lead her and his family toward God with Christ-like example. A wife is to graciously submit to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. The respective roles and responsibilities given by God to the husband and to the wife may not be exchanged nor delegated to the opposite spouse. Men, both within the home and within the church, are the ones primarily given the responsibility of teaching God's word to the church and to the family.

Children, from the moment of conception, are made in God's image and are deserving of all the rights, protections, and privileges owing to all people. They are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Additionally, we affirm the Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (1988), the Nashville Statement on Biblical Sexuality (2017), and the Dallas Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel (2018). See Appendices B, C, and D.

## **Article VII. Removal of Senior Pastor/Lead Elder**

In the case that the removal of the Senior Pastor is being considered, the Senior Pastor shall be presented to the church body at a members meeting or special meeting. Procedure for removing the Lead Elder shall be as follows:

- a. The Lead Elder may only be removed for objective and/or overt moral sins, e.g., adultery, fornication, drunkenness, theft, etc.
- b. The Lead Elder may not be removed for subjective sins, e.g., unkindness, aloofness, pride, arrogance, domineering, divisiveness, etc.
- c. Those bringing charges against the Lead Elder shall present their evidence and eyewitnesses to the Elder Board.
- d. The Elder Board and a committee of not less than five (5) church members, selected by the elders (including the Senior Pastor), shall investigate the veracity of the evidence and eyewitnesses. They shall investigate and interview all parties involved.
- e. Should the elder board accept the credibility of the evidence and eyewitnesses, by unanimous vote of the elder board, a members meeting or special meeting shall be convened (see Constitution, Article IX).
- f. At the scheduled members meeting, before the members of the church, the elder board shall read the charges against the Lead Elder, shall present the evidence, and present any and all witnesses.
- g. The Lead Elder shall be allowed to secure counsel and present a defense and be allowed to question the evidence and any eyewitnesses.
- h. No testimony shall be permitted or made public without the witness being present to answer questions.
- i. The congregation shall be allowed to question the evidence and any and all eyewitnesses to the charges.
- j. Once all evidence and eyewitnesses have been examined and cross-examined to the satisfaction of the congregation, a motion may be made to call for dismissal of charges or a vote of no-confidence.

## **Article VIII. Use of Social Media**

This Social Media bylaw applies to all online and mobile platforms for sharing content and information, whether controlled by Grace Reformed Church (GRC) or hosted by others, on which members of GRC engage in discussions or activities relating to our church. The term “social media” refers to social networking services, blogs, message boards, podcasts, and other methods for real-time information sharing among users. Because this is a constantly evolving area, this bylaw applies to all new social media platforms whether or not they are specifically mentioned here.

In areas where this bylaw does not provide a direct answer for how members of our church should answer social-media questions, members should use their best judgment and take the most thoughtful and prudent action possible, bearing in mind GRC’s need to preserve accountability for the use of its name in all social media and the core values of this bylaw:

The following are guidelines for church members to carefully follow;



- a. Be selective – there are a variety of digital platforms available. Use the right medium for your message – a blog or social network might not be the right place for messages intended only for a small group, and email or other more targeted media might be best.
- b. Be responsible – social media are individual interactions, not official church communications. Members of Grace Reformed Church are personally responsible for the content they publish. Official statements of church policy may only be made by the Pastor or his designee.
- c. Be smart – a blog or community post is often visible to the entire world and can be shared by others in ways that you cannot control. Remember that what you write is public and will remain public for a very long time (perhaps permanently). Be respectful to fellow church members.
- d. Be identified – authenticity and transparency are driving forces behind social media. Use real identities to the greatest extent possible rather than anonymous posts and comments.
- e. Respect the privacy of others – do not publish the personal information of others in the church without their permission or, in the case of children under 18, written permission of their parents. This is particularly important with regards to minors as some parents do not wish their children’s personal information and images to be shared online.
- f. Be respectful – Grace Reformed Church strives to be a thoughtful and prayerful community that encourages free expression and values civil debate. If you disagree with others, do not correct, criticize, slander, gossip about or otherwise attack fellow church members on any social media platform. This should always be done in person and in private. Respect your audience, express your views with appropriate language, and be respectful of Grace Reformed Church and its teachings.
- g. Be trustworthy – respect the confidentiality of matters that are shared with you in confidence, or that are meant to be kept confidential by the nature of your work or ministry.

**Use of Official Name and Logo.** Any use of the Grace Reformed Church name or logo for branding or titling pages, blogs, or other similar elements of social media must be approved in writing prior to use. Requests for prior consent to use such names or logos should be made to the Elder Board. Permission to use the name or logo of the church may be revoked at any time in the sole discretion of the elder(s). This policy, however, should fully preserve free expression. It should not, for example, be interpreted to limit the ability of members of GRC from using the name of Grace Reformed Church to identify themselves in profiles, discuss matters relating to the church, or other similar uses.

**Duties of Owners and Moderators.** Moderators of official Grace Reformed Church social media are responsible for ensuring compliance with this bylaw. All comment and response areas should be moderated, if possible, and consistent with the goal of the forum. Leaders responsible for such areas should review all comments and should remove any comments that do not meet our standards for civility, misrepresent the position of the church or that include profanity, defamatory language or speech that is otherwise inappropriate or off topic.

**Individual Judgment.** Even when engaging in social media for personal use, the comments of a church member may be viewed as a reflection on Grace Reformed Church. Users should use

their best judgment when engaging in social media activities and should be on guard against actions and discussions that could harm the interests of our church or tarnish the name of Christ.

**Transparency.** Users' social media communications are made in their personal capacity and not on behalf of Grace Reformed Church. Statements made by church members should not be taken as expressing the formal position of the church unless the speaker is specifically authorized to do so by the Senior Pastor, the elders or the elders' designee.

**Accountability.** Any use of social media that does not comply with this bylaw should be brought to the attention of the user. If the matter is not resolved, it should be brought to the attention of the elder(s).

### **Article IX. Church Vision**

In establishing effective leadership within the church, the vision of the Senior Pastor will be represented and carried out. It is the responsibility of the Senior Pastor to clearly articulate to the Board of Elders and the members of the congregation the vision and mission of the church.

### **Article X. Finances**

#### **A. Internal Controls**

1. The Treasurer, under the direction and supervision of the elder(s), shall oversee the church finance committee.
2. Ordinarily, the Treasurer should also be a deacon of the church.
3. The number of finance committee members shall be determined by the elder(s).
4. No members of the finance committee shall be biologically nor legally related to each other.
5. The Treasurer, along with the church finance committee, shall account for all church income and expenses.
6. The elder(s) of the church shall be the only ones to authorize the withdrawal of funds from the bank or write checks. (See section C5)
7. The elder(s) of the church shall be the only ones authorized to possess a church debit/credit card. (See section C5)
8. The finance committee shall report to the elder board.
9. The fiscal year for the church shall run March 1-February 29.

#### **B. Collection and Deposit of Tithes and Offerings**

1. The Treasurer and a member of the finance committee shall count the tithes and offerings immediately after the Sunday worship service each week.
2. In the absence of the Treasurer, another deacon may stand in for the Treasurer. In the absence of an alternate deacon, two finance committee members may count the tithes and offerings.
3. As the tithes and offerings are being counted, three forms are to be completed.
  - a. The amounts of tithes and offerings received on Sunday shall be recorded on two form logs, each being signed by the Treasurer and the finance committee member assisting the Treasurer.
    - i. One form shall be maintained by the Treasurer.
    - ii. The second form shall be maintained by the finance committee.

- iii. A copy of the form shall be forwarded to the elder(s).
  - b. On a third form, the Treasurer shall record the names and amounts of tithes and offerings being given for tax purposes only.
- 4. The names and amounts being given to the church by each family or individual shall be *kept strictly confidential* to the Treasurer alone.
- 5. Tithes and offerings received on Sunday shall be deposited that same day into the bank by means of the after-hours deposit box.

### **C. Accountability**

- 1. On every fifth year, the Lead Pastor shall direct the Finance Committee to contract with an outside financial firm to conduct a review or audit, as determined by the elder(s). This review/audit of all financial records shall be made during the fifth calendar year.
- 2. The finance committee shall present a monthly financial report and bank statements to the elder(s).
- 3. The finance committee shall present a bi-annual financial report and offer copies of bank statements to the church membership.
- 4. The Treasurer shall maintain a record of individual giving.
- 5. Except in the case of large purchases, determined by the elder(s), all purchases for the church shall be made using an individual's personal funds.
  - a. Receipts shall be furnished to the finance committee and a reimbursement form completed for reimbursement.
  - b. Receipts and reimbursement forms must be submitted within 30 days of the purchase.
  - c. Without receipts and a reimbursement form a reimbursement shall not be furnished.
- 6. It is the duty of the Treasurer and the finance committee to abide by and defend the financial bylaw of Grace Reformed Church, and to ensure that others are abiding by this same financial bylaw.
- 7. The finance committee shall meet monthly for prayer, accountability, and sharing information.

## **Article XI. Review of Church Records**

### **Section 1 Requests Made by Congregant**

To ensure the trust of the congregants, church records and basic financial information may be available for congregational inspection and review. At no time may information be supplied that would violate Article X, Section B of these Bylaws. Any questions by any congregant shall be addressed to the treasurer either in writing or by scheduled appointment.

### **Section 2 Required Provisions of the Request**

The request must state the name of the individual, the reason for the request and that the information shall in no way be made public or shared with any other congregant in a way that will jeopardize the church.

### **Section 3 Confidentiality**

In order to keep the records of the church confidential, records shall not be released to any outside agency, person or entity unless due process has been served and a certified subpoena has been personally delivered.

### **Section 4 Denying a Request**

The Board of Elders reserves the right to deny such a request for any of the following reasons:

1. The request is considered by the Board of Directors and deemed to be frivolous;
2. The individual does not adequately provide the required information on the request as stated in this Article;
3. The person making a request is not a member of this church.

### **Article XII. Considerations**

Anything that has not been discussed in this Constitution or these Bylaws shall be discussed and decided upon at an official Board of Elders meeting.

### **Article XIII. Amendments**

Any member of the church may propose an amendment to the Bylaws by submitting the proposed amendment in writing to the Elder(s) for review and approval. Upon approval by the Elder(s), the proposed amendment must be approved by a simple majority vote of a quorum at a regularly scheduled members' meeting.

These Bylaws shall not be amended in a way which contradicts the church confession of faith, Constitution, or position statements.

### **Article XIV. Leadership and Teaching Positions**

In order to hold the position of elder, deacon, or Bible teacher on any level, that person must be a member in good standing of Grace Reformed Church and be in complete and unwavering agreement with the First London Baptist Confession of Faith (1646) and any position statements GRC affirms.

To the greatest extent practical, leadership positions within the church shall be filled by men. This is in keeping with our belief that God calls men to be in positions of leadership within the home, church, and society. The woman is called by God to fill the role of submissive helper to the man, and children are to be ministered to, not doing the ministering. Children need to be taught and trained, not doing the teaching and training. For this reason, regular positions of ministry are limited to adult members of the church.

### **Article XV. Membership Process**

Individuals desiring to become members of Grace Reformed Church must complete the following process: (1) complete an application form for church membership, (2) be interviewed by two elders to determine a credible profession of faith and baptism. In the absence of two elders, the interview shall be conducted by one elder and one deacon. In the absence of one elder and one deacon, the interview shall be conducted by one elder and a member of the Advisory Board, (3) attend a new-comers class, (4) read entirely the church constitution and bylaws, and

(5) be presented to the church body during a Sunday worship service, members meeting, or special meeting.

#### **Article XVI. Women's Ministries**

The vision for our women at Grace Reformed Church is that they would desire to pursue and live out their God-given roles and responsibilities. For that reason, women's ministries are to be focused on those areas of ministries which are specific to women: loving, respecting, submitting to their husbands, being helpmates for their husbands, caring for their children, pursuing and practicing holiness, keeping the home, practicing hospitality and modesty, and teaching the younger women to do the same. Women's studies are to be focused on book discussions which cover those areas of ministry specific to women. Any women's study taught by women directly from Scripture are to be done using a topical approach focusing on those areas of ministries specific to women from God's Word. (Gen 2:18; Prov 31:10-31; Eph 5:22-24, 33; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-6)

At Grace Reformed Church we do not believe in segregating groups by gender and age. We believe both men and women can greatly benefit from learning together, ministering to each other, and sharing each other's burdens and victories. There is a time and place for women to directly minister to women (Titus 2:4), but these occasions should be limited as the primary Bible teacher and minister within the church is the Senior Pastor, second the elders, and third the men of the church.

#### **Article XVII. Intergenerational Ministry**

At Grace Reformed Church we are convinced that the various age generations need each other. We are convinced that teenagers will become spiritually mature adults by being with spiritually mature adults, not by being isolated from the adult community. We are convinced that adults of all ages will take their faith more seriously if they know the well-being of the children and teenagers in the congregation depends, in part, upon their faithfulness to Christ and to interacting with the next generation among us. As a result of these convictions, we adhere to the following principles:

- God commands parents, especially fathers, to train their children in the Christian faith.
- Parents should be the primary Bible teachers for their children because they care what happens to their children and therefore are "naturally" more motivated to work for the good of their children than anyone else.
- Children have a "natural" affection and respect for their parents that motivate them to want to please them and imitate them.
- To know and love Christ is not simply information to be known but a life to be lived, thus, parents not only impart Christian truth but also model Christian living.

The above principles mean that Sunday school classes only run through age 12. At age 13 and above, teenagers should attend adult Sunday school classes and midweek studies. They should be encouraged to participate in as many adult events as is practical. Youth ministry is parents ministering to their own children. The best way to prepare teenagers for adulthood is to allow them to interact with spiritually mature Christian adults as often as possible.

Children of all ages should be encouraged and taught to sit quietly in the worship service and observe the adults engaging in the serious worship of God. For this reason, nursery is provided for children ages 0-4. At five years of age, they are brought into the sanctuary and allowed to participate in all the sights, sounds, and scents of corporate worship. Nursery for ages 0-4 is optional and left to the judgement of parents. (Dt 6:4-9; 11:19; Prov 1:8-9, 4:1-2, 10-11, 20-22; 13:20; Eph 6:4)

### **Article XVIII. Government Compliance**

In view of articles XLVIII and XLIX of our statement of faith, Grace Reformed Church shall comply with all government requirements so long as those requirements do not infringe upon or contradict Holy Scripture, our statement of faith, or any theological position statements the church affirms.

### **Article XIX. Ordination of Elders and Deacons**

To be ordained, elders must orally answer the following questions before the Elder Board of Grace Reformed Church with only a Bible in hand. No notes.

#### Theological Questions

1. Explain the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures and the importance of the doctrine.
2. Explain the Trinity and the significance of this doctrine for the Christian life.
3. Explain the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, and the person and work of Christ.
4. Explain the nature of man, the fall, and the impact of sin on the human condition.  
Furthermore, explain the relationship of sin to human responsibility and freedom of the will.
5. Explain the doctrine of Election and its ramifications for the Christian life.
6. Explain the nature, design, and extent of Christ's atonement.
7. Explain effectual (irresistible) calling and the relationship of the new birth to saving faith.
8. Explain the doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone and why this doctrine is so vital to the life of the Church.
9. Explain the Doctrines of Eternal Security and Perseverance of the Saints, and their relation to the question of falling away from salvation.
10. Explain the origin of the Church, her relationship to Old Testament Israel, and her universal and local expressions.
11. Explain the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
12. Outline the major end time events, the rapture, and the millennial reign of Christ.

#### Practical Questions

1. Explain the Gospel message and what a person must do to be saved.
2. Explain your understanding of the Christian life, specifically whether a saved person must live in obedience to God's word.
3. Explain the relationship of the Christian to the Old Testament law, specifically address the role of the Sabbath in the Christian life.
4. Explain your understanding of Christian liberty; for example, attending movies, watching T.V., listening to music, using tobacco/alcohol, modesty in dress, tattoos, etc.
5. Explain your understanding of spiritual gifts, whether or not they exist, and if so, how they are to be practiced in the church.

6. Explain the role of husbands and fathers within marriage and within the family.
7. Explain the role of wives and mothers within marriage and within the family,
8. Explain the role of men and women within the church.
9. Explain the purpose for the Church and her ministry.
10. Explain your understanding of the qualifications and work of an elder.
11. Explain the biblical view of divorce and remarriage.
12. Explain your view of infant baptism.

Upon their installment into the office of elder and upon returning from sabbatical, elders shall publicly profess the following vows:

#### Questions to the Elder Candidate:

1. Do you [candidate's name] believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the confession of faith and theological position statements of Grace Reformed Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the church's beliefs and practices, you will on your own initiative, make known to your fellow elder(s) the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
3. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of Grace Reformed Church and believe them to be in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?
4. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
5. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?
6. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining and defending the truths of the Gospel, our church statement of faith and governing documents, and the purity and peace and unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?
7. Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, whether personal or relational, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God shall make you overseer?
8. Are you now willing to take the charge of this church, agreeable to your declaration when accepting their call? And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge to it the duties of an elder?

#### Questions to Congregation:

1. Do you, the members of Grace Reformed Church, continue to profess your readiness to receive [candidate's name] whom you have called to be your elder?
2. Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due exercise of discipline?

3. Do you promise to encourage him in his labors, to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification, and to pray for him regularly?

Upon their installment into the office of deacon and upon returning from sabbatical, deacons shall publicly profess the following vows:

Questions to the Deacon candidate:

1. Do you [candidate's name] believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the confession of faith and theological position statements of Grace Reformed Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the church's beliefs and practices, you will on your own initiative, make known to your fellow elder(s) the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
3. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of Grace Reformed Church and believe them to be in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?
4. Do you accept the office of deacon in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, to be zealous and faithful in maintaining and defending the truths of the Gospel, our church statement of faith and governing documents, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the church of which God has made you an officer?
5. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
6. Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the church?

Ordination question posed to the congregation:

1. Do you, the members of Grace Reformed Church, acknowledge and receive [candidate's name] as a deacon, and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encouragement and obedience in the Lord to which his office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this church, entitles him?

### **Article XX. Voting Procedures**

When voting at church meetings, voting for amendments to the church constitution or voting to adopt, change, or remove church bylaws, policies, or procedures will be conducted by public voting method (show of hands, voice vote, etc.). However, voting to install, remove, or discipline a church officer (elder or deacon), staff member, or volunteer shall be conducted by secret ballot.

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## **Appendix A. Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978)**

### **Preface**

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition. It has been prepared in the course of a three- day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life, and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

### **A Short Statement**

God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.

Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as

God's instruction, in all that it affirms, obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.

Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

## **Articles of Affirmation and Denial**

### **Article I**

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

### **Article II**

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

### **Article III**

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

### **Article IV**

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

### **Article V**

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

#### **Article VI**

We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

#### **Article VII**

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

#### **Article VIII**

We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

#### **Article IX**

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

#### **Article X**

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

#### **Article XI**

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

#### **Article XII**

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

#### **Article XIII**

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

#### **Article XIV**

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

#### **Article XV**

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

#### **Article XVI**

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

#### **Article XVII**

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

**Article XVIII**

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

**Article XIX**

We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences both to the individual and to the Church.

## **Appendix B. Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (1988)**

The Danvers Statement summarizes the need for the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) and serves as an overview of our core beliefs. This statement was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a CBMW meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December of 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, Illinois in November of 1988.

### **Rationale**

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

### **Purposes**

Recognizing our own abiding sinfulness and fallibility, and acknowledging the genuine evangelical standing of many who do not agree with all of our convictions, nevertheless, moved by the preceding observations and by the hope that the noble Biblical vision of sexual complementarity may yet win the mind and heart of Christ's church, we engage to pursue the following purposes:

1. To study and set forth the Biblical view of the relationship between men and women, especially in the home and in the church.
2. To promote the publication of scholarly and popular materials representing this view.

3. To encourage the confidence of lay people to study and understand for themselves the teaching of Scripture, especially on the issue of relationships between men and women.
4. To encourage the considered and sensitive application of this Biblical view in the appropriate spheres of life.
5. And thereby
  - to bring healing to persons and relationships injured by an inadequate grasp of God’s will concerning manhood and womanhood,
  - to help both men and women realize their full ministry potential through a true understanding and practice of their God-given roles,
  - and to promote the spread of the gospel among all peoples by fostering a Biblical wholeness in relationships that will attract a fractured world.

### **Affirmations**

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
3. Adam’s headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
  1. In the home, the husband’s loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife’s intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
  2. In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
  1. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands’ authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands’ leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
  2. In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).

8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.



## **Appendix C. Nashville Statement on Biblical Sexuality (2017)**

### **Preamble**

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God's design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God's beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual's autonomous preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God's good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes glad hearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God's design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God's good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

### **Article 1**

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

### **Article 2**

WE AFFIRM that God’s revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

### **Article 3**

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

### **Article 4**

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God’s original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

### **Article 5**

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God’s design for self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

### **Article 6**

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about “eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb.” With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person’s biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

### **Article 7**

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption.

### **Article 8**

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God’s original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

### **Article 9**

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant

and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

#### **Article 10**

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

#### **Article 11**

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God’s design of his image bearers as male and female.

#### **Article 12**

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

#### **Article 13**

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one’s biological sex and one’s self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God’s revealed will.

#### **Article 14**

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ’s death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord’s arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.

## **Appendix D. Dallas Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel (2018)**

### **I. Scripture**

WE AFFIRM that the Bible is God's Word, breathed out by him. It is inerrant, infallible, and the final authority for determining what is true (what we must believe) and what is right (how we must live). All truth claims and ethical standards must be tested by God's final Word, which is Scripture alone.

WE DENY that Christian belief, character, or conduct can be dictated by any other authority, and we deny that the postmodern ideologies derived from intersectionality, radical feminism, and critical race theory are consistent with biblical teaching. We further deny that competency to teach on any biblical issue comes from any qualification for spiritual people other than clear understanding and simple communication of what is revealed in Scripture.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 2:18-25; PSALM 19:7-10; 1 CORINTHIANS 2:14-15; EPHESIANS 5:22-33; 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-4:5; HEBREWS 4:12; 13:4; 1 PETER 1:25; 2 PETER 1:19-21

### **II. Imago Dei**

WE AFFIRM that God created every person equally in his own image. As divine image-bearers, all people have inestimable value and dignity before God and deserve honor, respect and protection. Everyone has been created by God and for God.

WE DENY that God-given roles, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, sex or physical condition or any other property of a person either negates or contributes to that individual's worth as an image-bearer of God.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:26-30; 2:18-22; 9:6; 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17; COLOSSIANS 1:21-22

### **III. Justice**

WE AFFIRM that since he is holy, righteous, and just, God requires those who bear his image to live justly in the world. This includes showing appropriate respect to every person and giving to each one what he or she is due. We affirm that societies must establish laws to correct injustices that have been imposed through cultural prejudice.

WE DENY that true justice can be culturally defined or that standards of justice that are merely socially constructed can be imposed with the same authority as those that are derived from Scripture. We further deny that Christians can live justly in the world under any principles other than the biblical standard of righteousness. Relativism, socially-constructed standards of truth or morality, and notions of virtue and vice that are constantly in flux cannot result in authentic justice.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 18:19; ISAIAH 61:8; MICAH 6:8; MATTHEW 5:17-19; ROMANS 3:31

### **IV. God's Law**

WE AFFIRM that God's law, as summarized in the ten commandments, more succinctly summarized in the two great commandments, and manifested in Jesus Christ, is the only standard of unchanging righteousness. Violation of that law is what constitutes sin.

WE DENY that any obligation that does not arise from God's commandments can be legitimately imposed on Christians as a prescription for righteous living. We further deny the legitimacy of any charge of sin or call to repentance that does not arise from a violation of God's commandments.

SCRIPTURE: DEUTERONOMY 10:4; ROMANS 6:14, 10:5; GALATIANS 2:16, 3:10, 12; COLOSSIANS 2:14-17; HEBREWS 10:1

## **V. Sin**

WE AFFIRM that all people are connected to Adam both naturally and federally. Therefore, because of original sin everyone is born under the curse of God's law and all break his commandments through sin. There is no difference in the condition of sinners due to age, ethnicity, or sex. All are depraved in all their faculties and all stand condemned before God's law. All human relationships, systems, and institutions have been affected by sin.

WE DENY that, other than the previously stated connection to Adam, any person is morally culpable for another person's sin. Although families, groups, and nations can sin collectively, and cultures can be predisposed to particular sins, subsequent generations share the collective guilt of their ancestors only if they approve and embrace (or attempt to justify) those sins. Before God each person must repent and confess his or her own sins in order to receive forgiveness. We further deny that one's ethnicity establishes any necessary connection to any particular sin.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 2:16, 17, 3:12,13-15; PROVERBS 29:18; ISAIAH 25:7, 60:2-3; JEREMIAH 31:27-34; EZEKIEL 18:1-9, 14-18; MATTHEW 23:29-36; ROMANS 1:16-17, 3:23, 5:12, 10:14-17; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-11; 2 CORINTHIANS 11:3; GALATIANS 1:6-9; TITUS 1:12, 13; REVELATION 13:8

## **VI. Gospel**

WE AFFIRM that the gospel is the divinely-revealed message concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ—especially his virgin birth, righteous life, substitutionary sacrifice, atoning death, and bodily resurrection—revealing who he is and what he has done with the promise that he will save anyone and everyone who turns from sin by trusting him as Lord.

WE DENY that anything else, whether works to be performed or opinions to be held, can be added to the gospel without perverting it into another gospel. This also means that implications and applications of the gospel, such as the obligation to live justly in the world, though legitimate and important in their own right, are not definitional components of the gospel.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 3:15; PROVERBS 29:18; ISAIAH 25:7, 60:2, 3; ROMANS 1:16-17, 10:14,15,17; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11; GALATIANS 1:6-9; REVELATION 13:8

## **VII. Salvation**

WE AFFIRM that salvation is granted by God's grace alone received through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Every believer is united to Christ, justified before God, and adopted into his family. Thus, in God's eyes there is no difference in spiritual value or worth among those who are in Christ. Further, all who are united to Christ are also united to one another regardless of age, ethnicity, or sex. All believers are being conformed to the image of Christ. By God's regenerating and sanctifying grace all believers will be brought to a final glorified, sinless state of perfection in the day of Jesus Christ.

WE DENY that salvation can be received in any other way. We also deny that salvation renders any Christian free from all remaining sin or immune from even grievous sin in this life. We further deny that ethnicity excludes anyone from understanding the gospel, nor does anyone's ethnic or cultural heritage mitigate or remove the duty to repent and believe.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 3:15; ACTS 20:32; ROMANS 3-4; EPHESIANS 2:8-9; GALATIANS 3:28-29; 1 JOHN 2:1-2

### **VIII. The Church**

WE AFFIRM that the primary role of the church is to worship God through the preaching of his word, teaching sound doctrine, observing baptism and the Lord's Supper, refuting those who contradict, equipping the saints, and evangelizing the lost. We affirm that when the primacy of the gospel is maintained that this often has a positive effect on the culture in which various societal ills are mollified. We affirm that, under the lordship of Christ, we are to obey the governing authorities established by God and pray for civil leaders.

WE DENY that political or social activism should be viewed as integral components of the gospel or primary to the mission of the church. Though believers can and should utilize all lawful means that God has providentially established to have some effect on the laws of a society, we deny that these activities are either evidence of saving faith or constitute a central part of the church's mission given to her by Jesus Christ, her head. We deny that laws or regulations possess any inherent power to change sinful hearts.

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 28:16-20; ROMANS 13:1-7; 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-3; 2 TIMOTHY 4:2; TITUS 1:9; 1 PETER 2:13-17

### **IX. Heresy**

WE AFFIRM that heresy is a denial of or departure from a doctrine that is essential to the Christian faith. We further affirm that heresy often involves the replacement of key, essential truths with variant concepts, or the elevation of non-essentials to the status of essentials. To embrace heresy is to depart from the faith once delivered to the saints and thus to be on a path toward spiritual destruction. We affirm that the accusation of heresy should be reserved for those departures from Christian truth that destroy the weight-bearing doctrines of the redemptive core of Scripture. We affirm that accusations of heresy should be accompanied with clear evidence of such destructive beliefs.

WE DENY that the charge of heresy can be legitimately brought against every failure to achieve perfect conformity to all that is implied in sincere faith in the gospel.

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 14:6; ACTS 4:12; GALATIANS 1:6-9; 1 JOHN 4:1-3, 10, 14, 15; 5:1, 6-12

### **X. Sexuality and Marriage**

WE AFFIRM that God created mankind male and female and that this divinely determined distinction is good, proper, and to be celebrated. Maleness and femaleness are biologically determined at conception and are not subject to change. The curse of sin results in sinful, disordered affections that manifest in some people as same-sex attraction. Salvation grants sanctifying power to renounce such dishonorable affections as sinful and to mortify them by the Spirit. We further affirm that God's design for marriage is that one woman and one man live in a

one-flesh, covenantal, sexual relationship until separated by death. Those who lack the desire or opportunity for marriage are called to serve God in singleness and chastity. This is as noble a calling as marriage.

WE DENY that human sexuality is a socially constructed concept. We also deny that one's sex can be fluid. We reject "gay Christian" as a legitimate biblical category. We further deny that any kind of partnership or union can properly be called marriage other than one man and one woman in lifelong covenant together. We further deny that people should be identified as "sexual minorities"—which serves as a cultural classification rather than one that honors the image-bearing character of human sexuality as created by God.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:26-27, 2:24, 4:1, 19:24-28; MATTHEW 19:3-6; ROMANS 8:13; 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11; 1 TIMOTHY 1:10; JUDE 7

### **XI. Complementarianism**

WE AFFIRM that God created mankind both male and female with inherent biological and personal distinctions between them and that these created differences are good, proper, and beautiful. Though there is no difference between men and women before God's law or as recipients of his saving grace, we affirm that God has designed men and women with distinct traits and to fulfill distinct roles. These differences are most clearly defined in marriage and the church, but are not irrelevant in other spheres of life. In marriage the husband is to lead, love, and safeguard his wife and the wife is to respect and be submissive to her husband in all things lawful. In the church, qualified men alone are to lead as pastors/elders/bishops and preach to and teach the whole congregation. We further affirm that the image of God is expressed most fully and beautifully in human society when men and women walk in obedience to their God-ordained roles and serve according to their God-given gifts.

WE DENY that the God-ordained differences in men's and women's roles disparage the inherent spiritual worth or value of one over the other, nor do those differences in any way inhibit either men or women from flourishing for the glory of God.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:26-28, 2:15-25, 3:1-24; EPHESIANS 5:22-33; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:7-9; 1 TIMOTHY 2:12-14; TITUS 2

### **XII. Race / Ethnicity**

WE AFFIRM God made all people from one man. Though people often can be distinguished by different ethnicities and nationalities, they are ontological equals before God in both creation and redemption. "Race" is not a biblical category, but rather a social construct that often has been used to classify groups of people in terms of inferiority and superiority. All that is good, honest, just, and beautiful in various ethnic backgrounds and experiences can be celebrated as the fruit of God's grace. All sinful actions and their results (including evils perpetrated between and upon ethnic groups by others) are to be confessed as sinful, repented of, and repudiated.

WE DENY that Christians should segregate themselves into racial groups or regard racial identity above, or even equal to, their identity in Christ. We deny that any divisions between people groups (from an unstated attitude of superiority to an overt spirit of resentment) have any legitimate place in the fellowship of the redeemed. We reject any teaching that encourages racial groups to view themselves as privileged oppressors or entitled victims of oppression. While we

are to weep with those who weep, we deny that a person's feelings of offense or oppression necessarily prove that someone else is guilty of sinful behaviors, oppression, or prejudice.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:26-28; ACTS 17:24-26; 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7; 2 CORINTHIANS 12:16-18

### **XIII. Culture**

WE AFFIRM that some cultures operate on assumptions that are inherently better than those of other cultures because of the biblical truths that inform those worldviews that have produced these distinct assumptions. Those elements of a given culture that reflect divine revelation should be celebrated and promoted. But the various cultures out of which we have been called all have features that are worldly and sinful—and therefore those sinful features should be repudiated for the honor of Christ. We affirm that whatever evil influences to which we have been subjected via our culture can be—and must be—overcome through conversion and the training of both mind and heart through biblical truth.

WE DENY that individuals and sub-groups in any culture are unable, by God's grace, to rise above whatever moral defects or spiritual deficiencies have been engendered or encouraged by their respective cultures.

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 1:18-32; EPHESIANS 4:17-24; COLOSSIANS 3:5-11

### **XIV. Racism**

WE AFFIRM that racism is a sin rooted in pride and malice which must be condemned and renounced by all who would honor the image of God in all people. Such racial sin can subtly or overtly manifest itself as racial animosity or racial vainglory. Such sinful prejudice or partiality falls short of God's revealed will and violates the royal law of love. We affirm that virtually all cultures, including our own, at times contain laws and systems that foster racist attitudes and policies.

WE DENY that treating people with sinful partiality or prejudice is consistent with biblical Christianity. We deny that only those in positions of power are capable of racism, or that individuals of any particular ethnic groups are incapable of racism. We deny that systemic racism is in any way compatible with the core principles of historic evangelical convictions. We deny that the Bible can be legitimately used to foster or justify partiality, prejudice, or contempt toward other ethnicities. We deny that the contemporary evangelical movement has any deliberate agenda to elevate one ethnic group and subjugate another. And we emphatically deny that lectures on social issues (or activism aimed at reshaping the wider culture) are as vital to the life and health of the church as the preaching of the gospel and the exposition of Scripture. Historically, such things tend to become distractions that inevitably lead to departures from the gospel.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:26-27; DEUTERONOMY 10:17; ACTS 10:34; ROMANS 2:11; EPHESIANS 6:9; GALATIANS 3:28; JAMES 2:4