

# **THE CONSTITUTION FOR THE FELLOWSHIP OF GRACE BRETHREN CHURCHES, INC.**

Adopted by Conference - July 1997

## **ARTICLE I OFFICES**

The principal office of the corporation shall be located at Winona Lake, Indiana. The corporation may have other offices as its business may require.

## **ARTICLE II PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches exists to encourage and enable member churches in equipping and uniting the saints in fulfilling the Great Commission.

## **ARTICLE III COVENANT AND STATEMENT OF FAITH**

Section One. Covenant. The sovereign congregations which are members of this corporation are united in accepting the Holy Scriptures as the sole guide and authority in all matters of faith, doctrine and practice.

Section Two. Statement of Faith. The Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches has a corporate commitment to a basic body of beliefs founded on God's revealed truth. The Statement of Faith is the current expression of a never ending effort to clarify an understanding of the primary doctrines we accept.

It is the understanding of this Fellowship that, although individual Grace Brethren Churches remain distinct, autonomous legal entities, congregational church government relates alone to the incidental affairs of the local congregation and not to doctrinal practices or tenets which must be general or universal -- the same in all congregations. The basic doctrines of one congregation shall be the same as the basic doctrines in every other.

Accordingly, the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, Inc., believing the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible to be the infallible rule of faith and of practice and feeling the responsibility to make known the divine message of the Bible, presents the following articles as a statement of those basic truths taught in the Bible which are common to our Christian faith and practice.

1. **THE BIBLE.** The Word of God, the sixty-six Books of the Old and New Testaments, verbally inspired in all parts, and therefore wholly without error as originally given of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).
2. **THE ONE TRUE GOD.** Existing eternally as three persons -the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22; Matthew 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).
3. **THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.** His preexistence and deity (John 1:1-3), incarnation by virgin birth (John 1:14; Matthew 1:18-23), sinless life (Heb. 4:15), substitutionary death (2 Cor. 5:21), bodily resurrection (Luke 24:36-43), ascension into heaven and present ministry (Heb. 4:14-16), and coming again (Acts 1:11).
4. **THE HOLY SPIRIT.** His personality (John 16:7-15), and deity (Acts 5:3-4), and His work in each believer: baptism and in-dwelling at the moment of regeneration (1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:9), and filling (Eph. 5:18) to empower for Christian life and service (Eph. 3:16; Acts 1:8; Gal. 5:22-23).
5. **MAN.** His direct creation in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28), his subsequent fall into sin resulting in spiritual death (Gen. 3:1-24; Rom. 5:12), and the necessity of the new birth for his salvation (John 3:3-5).
6. **SALVATION.** A complete and eternal salvation by God's grace alone received as the gift of God through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:18-19).
7. **THE CHURCH.** One true church, the body and the bride of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-32), composed of all

true believers of the present age (1 Cor. 12:12-13); and the organization of its members in local churches for worship, for edification of believers, and for world-wide gospel witness, each local church being autonomous but cooperating in fellowship and work (Eph. 4:11-16).

8. CHRISTIAN LIFE. A life of righteousness, good works and separation unto God from the evil ways of the world (Rom. 12:1-2), manifested by speaking the truth (James 5:12), maintaining the sanctity of the home (Eph. 5:22-6:4), settling differences between Christians in accordance with the Word of God (1 Cor. 6:1-8), not engaging in carnal strife but showing a Christ-like attitude toward all men (Rom. 12:17-21), exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), and maintaining a life of prayer (Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6), including the privilege, when sick, of calling for the elders of the church to pray and to anoint with oil in the name of the Lord (James 5:13-18).
9. ORDINANCES. The Christians should observe the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ which are (1) baptism of believers by triune immersion (Matt. 28:19) and (2) the threefold communion service, consisting of the washing of the saints' feet (John 13:1-17), the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-22, 33-34; Jude 12), and the communion of the bread and the cup (1 Cor. 11:23-26).
10. SATAN. His existence and personality as the great adversary of God and His people (Rev. 12:1-10), his judgment (John 12:31), and final doom (Rev. 20:10).
11. SECOND COMING. The personal, visible, and imminent return of Christ to remove His church from the earth (1 Thess. 4:16-17) before the tribulation (1 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 3:10), and afterward to descend with the Church to establish His millennial kingdom upon the earth (Rev. 19:11-20:6).
12. FUTURE LIFE. The conscious existence of the dead (Phil. 1:21-23; Luke 16:19-31), the resurrection of the body (John 5:28-29), the judgment and reward of believers (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10), the judgment and condemnation of unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15), the eternal life of the saved (John 3:16), and the eternal punishment of the lost (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 20:15).

#### **ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP**

Section One. Requirements. Any congregation of believers desiring membership in the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, Inc., shall meet the following conditions:

1. It shall subscribe to the Covenant and Statement of Faith as stated in Article III of this Constitution.
2. It shall have a basic organization consisting of elder(s) and deacon(s), or similar responsible officers.
3. It shall include the words "Grace Brethren" in its name or otherwise indicate clearly its affiliation with the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches.
4. In the performance of the ordinances it shall practice baptism by triune immersion only and the threefold communion service only.
5. Requirements and responsibilities for membership by the several local churches shall be established by each church and shall not determine the church's membership in the Fellowship.
6. No church shall be denied membership in the corporation because of failure to support any or all institutions or boards, either district or national, or cooperating organizations recognized by the Fellowship except that failure to comply with membership obligations as stated in Article II, Section Three, points #2, 3, and 5 of the Manual of Procedure may subject the offending church to dismissal.

Section Two. Voting Rights. Each member church shall be entitled to be represented at any meeting of the corporation through delegate(s) of its choosing.

1. Each member church shall be entitled to one delegate for every twenty-five members or major fraction thereof; provided that every church shall be entitled to at least two delegates.
2. Only persons who are members of the Grace Brethren Church they represent shall be seated as delegates to

any meeting of the corporation. Representation at National Conference is based on **the** total membership of the local church.

3. Each member church shall be entitled to one vote per delegate on each matter submitted to a vote at any meeting of the corporation. (Exception: delegates from churches which receive members without triune immersion may not vote on any matter involving the subject of water baptism in relation to church membership. This limitation does not apply to medical exceptions.)

## **ARTICLE V**

### **MEETINGS OF MEMBERS**

Section One. Annual Meeting. The annual meeting of members shall be held at the time and place recommended by the Fellowship Council and approved at a previous annual meeting of members. This annual meeting is referred to in this Constitution and the Manual of Procedure as "the annual meeting of the corporation" and "conference."

Section Two. Special Meetings. Special meetings of members may be called by the Fellowship Council for emergency needs at any time and place designated by it. Member churches shall be represented at any special meeting by the delegates who represented them at the last annual meeting or duly certified alternates.

Section Three. Quorum. A quorum shall consist of the delegates present, entitled to vote, and voting at any meeting of the corporation.

Section Four. Delegates. The following shall be seated as delegates to any meeting of the corporation:

1. Officers. Officers of the corporation shall be delegates *ex-officio with voting privileges*.
2. Delegates shall be seated provided that the delegates meet the qualifications of Article IV, Section Two, points #1 and 2.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **FELLOWSHIP COUNCIL (BOARD OF DIRECTORS)**

Section One. General Powers. The business and affairs of the corporation shall be managed by its board of directors which shall be known as the Fellowship Council.

Section Two. Number and Term. The number of members of the fellowship Council shall be sixteen. Twelve members shall be elected by the corporation, and each of the twelve shall be elected and serve a term of four years. The twelve elected members shall represent the three geographic regions of the United States described in Article V, Section Two, point #3 of the Manual of Procedure with four members to serve from each region. Only one member of any single church or two representatives from any single district shall serve on the Council at any one time, not including *ex-officio* members of the Council.

The remaining four members of the Fellowship Council shall be the moderator, first moderator-elect, second moderator-elect and retiring moderator.

Council members will begin their terms at the conclusion of the conference at which they are elected.

Section Three. Qualifications. All nominees for Council membership must be triune-immersed members in good standing of a member church recognized by the corporation. They must be men who have met the spiritual qualifications for an elder as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. They must have given their consent to nomination and service. Members of the Council may not serve consecutive terms but may be re-elected after four years absence from the Council. This restriction shall not apply to members serving fewer than three years or to ex-

*officio* members of the Council.

Section Four. Election.

1. Members of the Council shall be elected by majority affirmative vote of the delegates present, entitled to vote, and voting at the Conference from a ballot presented by the Nominating Committee. In the event that no nominee receives a majority affirmative vote, there shall be an additional ballot presented with the two nominees who have received the highest number of votes.
2. Voting for nominees from each of the three regions shall be restricted to delegates from the churches in those regions.
3. Nominees elected to the Council shall be the one from each region receiving the majority affirmative vote of the delegates representing those regions present, entitled to vote, and voting.

**ARTICLE VII**  
OFFICERS

Section One. Officers. The officers of the corporation shall be a moderator, first moderator-elect, second moderator-elect, secretary, and treasurer. The moderator shall serve as chairman of the Fellowship Council, and the first moderator-elect as vice-chairman of the same body.

Section Two. Election. The second moderator-elect shall be elected by majority affirmative vote of the delegates present, entitled to vote, and voting at the annual meeting of the corporation. Nominees may be added to the ballot from the floor, provided the nomination is seconded and the nominees so named meet the qualifications set forth in Article VI, Section Three of this Constitution.

The secretary and treasurer shall be elected annually by majority vote of the Fellowship Council at its annual meeting. These elections shall be ratified by the corporation at the annual meeting immediately following the election.

Section Three. Term. The officers of the corporation will be installed at the conclusion of the conference at which they are elected and will serve for one conference year or until their successors are elected or appointed and installed.

Section Four. Responsibilities and Duties. The officers shall have the powers and discharge the duties customarily and usually held and performed by like officers in similar corporations, including, but not limited to those outlined in the Manual of Procedure.

**ARTICLE VIII**  
COMMITTEES

Section One. Committees. The Fellowship Council, by resolution of a majority of the Council members, may designate one or more committees or persons to exercise the authority of the Fellowship Council to the extent provided in the resolution. The resolution shall include a termination date for the committee's service which may be extended only by specific action of the Fellowship Council or the Conference.

Section Two. Nominating Committee.

1. A nominating committee of six members shall be elected annually by the conference from nominees suggested by the Fellowship Council. All nominees shall be members in good standing of congregations

affiliated with the FGBC and have agreed to nomination and service. Additional nominations from the floor may be accepted.

2. The chairman shall be the nominee receiving the highest number of votes in the election.

#### Section Three. Parliamentary Committee.

1. A parliamentary committee of three members shall be named by the Fellowship Council prior to the conference.
2. It shall be the duty of this committee to interpret this Constitution and the Manual of Procedure whenever questions concerning them shall arise and to assist the presiding officer in questions of procedure and in the orderly conduct of the business sessions of the conference.

### **ARTICLE IX**

#### COOPERATING DISTRICTS

Section One. Requirements. Although FGBC Cooperating Districts remain distinct, autonomous legal entities, in order to be granted and to maintain the status of a FGBC Cooperating District, the following requirements must be met.

1. A district may be formed with a minimum of three churches.
2. The district may be organized for fellowship and cooperative ministry with area churches and the FGBC.
3. The district and district officers shall subscribe to the FGBC Statement of Faith.
4. All member churches of a district must be in good standing with FGBC.
5. The district shall have made application with FGBC for recognition as a cooperating district.

### **ARTICLE X**

#### COOPERATING ORGANIZATIONS

Section One. Requirements. Although FGBC cooperating organizations remain distinct, autonomous legal entities, such organizations seeking recognition by the corporation and desiring to serve the Fellowship as a cooperating organization shall meet the following requirements:

1. The organization and its governing body must subscribe to the Statement of Faith set forth in Section Two of Article III of this Constitution.
2. The organization must be sponsored and controlled by members of FGBC churches. The organization shall not be a subsidiary of only one local church; it shall have representation on its governing board from each of the three geographical regions of the Fellowship as identified in Article V, Section Two, Point # 3 of the Manual of Procedure except that an organization serving a specific geographical area shall be exempt from the requirement of regional representation on its governing board.
3. The organization must have a scope of ministry broader than the immediate local church ministries and exist to serve other Grace Brethren Churches.

4. The organization must meet a recognized need related to the fulfilling of the Great Commission.

Section Two. Procedure. Organizations meeting the requirements of Section One of this Article may be recognized by the Fellowship, upon recommendation of the Fellowship Council, by two-thirds affirmative majority vote of the delegates present, entitled to vote, and voting.

Section Three. Recognized Organizations. Organizations recognized as cooperating organizations of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, Inc. are not creations of the Fellowship, nor are they an integral part of its organization. While the Fellowship Conference requests an annual report as a courtesy, the Fellowship Conference does not in any way control any of the recognized cooperating organizations.

## **ARTICLE XI** **MISCELLANEOUS**

Section One. Continuing Resolutions. Continuing resolutions may be submitted at the annual meeting of the corporation by the Fellowship Council or from the floor. The resolution must be in writing. If the resolution is submitted from the floor, a written presentation must be given to the secretary during the same business session at which the resolution is presented.

Section Two. Conference Year. The conference year shall begin with the conclusion of the conference and continue to the conclusion of the succeeding conference.

Section Three. Affiliations. The Fellowship may affiliate with other fraternal, evangelical organizations only with the adoption of an appropriate resolution by the Conference. Cooperation with such organizations, without formal membership, may be approved by the Executive Committee of the Fellowship Council.

## **ARTICLE XII** **AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION**

Section One. Amendments in General. This Constitution may be altered or repealed at any annual or special meeting of the corporation by two-thirds majority affirmative vote of the delegates present, entitled to vote, and voting at said meeting, provided that the proposed amendment had been presented to the delegates at a previous business session of the conference and to the Fellowship Council for study and recommendation. Provided further, that the Statement of Faith set forth in Section Two of Article III may be amended only by the procedure outlined in Section Two of this Article.

Section Two. Amendment of Statement of Faith. The Statement of Faith set forth in Section Two of Article III may be amended only through the following procedure:

1. Any delegate wishing to see the Statement of Faith amended must present a written copy of the proposed amendment to the secretary of the conference in a previous session of the conference before the proposal is presented in the form of a motion. The conference shall have the right to request that printed copies of the proposal be provided for the delegates before further action is taken.
2. If an amendment is sustained by a two-thirds majority affirmative vote of the delegates present, entitled to vote, and voting in favor of the proposed amendment to the Statement of Faith, the proposal shall then be sent by the secretary to all churches which have been approved as member churches in that year's conference.

3. Each local church receiving a copy of the proposed amendment shall vote on the proposal within twenty-three months.
4. Before the call to order of the first business session in the second year following the offering of the amendment, each church receiving a copy of the proposed amendment to the Statement of Faith shall have submitted one vote per church to the secretary.
5. At least two-thirds of the churches responding must favor the proposed amendment before a second reading of the amendment is permitted, thereby allowing the conference delegates to place on the floor a properly supported motion calling for the adoption of the amendment to the Statement of Faith. A two-thirds majority affirmative vote of the delegates present, entitled to vote, and voting shall be required to sustain the motion, thereby incorporating the amendment into the Statement of Faith.