

# **SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH**

## **CONSTITUTION**

**Amended and Restated June 2010**

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## PREAMBLE

### **Original Intent**

Having been led by the Spirit of God, this congregation, in April of 1997, approved the original constitution as we came together in unity as one body in Christ. This revision was undertaken to refine the organizational structure, lines of authority, and flow of communication.

### **Commitment/Mission**

We commit to the Great Commandment: "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deuteronomy 6:5) We also commit to the command to "love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18) We also commit to fulfilling the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Article I. NAME AND AFFILIATION

This local body of God's Church, located in Medina, Ohio, will be known as Shepherd's Grace Church. This church is voluntarily affiliated with the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches (FGBC).

## Article II. AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

### Section 2.01 Authority

**(a) Jesus Christ:** Jesus Christ, who declared Himself to be the founder and foundation of the church, serves as our Lord and Savior, the head and chief servant of the church as the savior of the church. He is the rock on which the church is built. The church exists for His glory and as a demonstration of His love for all mankind. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ preserves and empowers the church, and will come again to call His church to His eternal glory. He is the chief authority over the church. (Matt. 28:18)

**(b) God's Word:** God superintended the human authors of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments so that they composed and recorded, without error, His message to mankind. The Bible is God's eternal revelation of objective truth, and is considered to be the sole authority of faith. It is to be the basis of all activity in the church, both by declaration and example. It is the first and foremost document in living life and in conflict resolution.

**(c) Constitution:** This constitution, approved by the membership of Shepherd's Grace Church, represents our best effort to apply the authority of Jesus Christ and the teaching of God's Word as it applies to the formation, organization, and operation of this local church.

**(d) Elders:** The men of God called by the Holy Spirit and approved by the members of the church to lead, feed and guard the church according to the will of the Lord following the principles given in God's Word.

#### **(e) Deacons and Trustees**

**(i) Deacons:** The men and women of God called by the Holy Spirit and approved by the members of the church to serve and direct service in the church under the oversight of the Elders.

**(ii) Trustees:** The legal officers of the church serving as representatives of the church in business matters under the oversight of the Elders.

**(f) Members:** The believers in Jesus Christ who have united with this body for doing the work of the ministry through obedience to God and the exercising of spiritual gifts. They are responsible for approving the Elders, Deacons and Trustees.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## **Section 2.02 Purpose**

This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law), including, but not limited to, for such purposes, the establishing and maintaining of religious worship, the building of churches, parsonages, schools, chapels, radio stations, television stations, rescue missions, print shops, daycare centers, and camps; the evangelizing of the unsaved by the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; the educating of believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture, both in Sunday and weekday schools of Christian education; and the maintaining of missionary activities in the United States and any foreign country.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Article III. DOCTRINAL POSITION

### Section 3.01 Statement of Faith

- (a) This statement of faith is that of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches with the exception of (xi) Second Coming.
- (i) **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).
- (ii) **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).
- (iii) **THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:** His preexistence and deity (John 1:13), 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).
- (iv) **THE HOLY SPIRIT:** His personality (John 16:7-15), and deity (Acts 5:3-4), and His work in each believer: baptism and indwelling 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).
- (v) **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 3:35).
- (vi) **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).
- (vii) **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 worldwide gospel witness, each local church being autonomous but cooperating in fellowship and work (Eph. 4:11-16).
- (viii) **CHRISTIAN LIFE:** A life of righteousness, good works, and separation unto God from the evil ways of the world (Rom. 12:12), 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).

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

- (ix) 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).
- (x) 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).
- (xi) SECOND COMING:** We believe in the blessed hope (Titus 2:13), which is the personal, visible, and imminent return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (Rev. 22:7).
- (xii) 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).

## Section 3.02 Ordinances

### (a) Baptism

- (i)** Candidates for baptism will be presented to the Senior Pastor or Elders for suitability based on Scripture and the Statement of Faith.
- (ii)** Once suitability is determined, the baptism by triune immersion will be set up as a public event for observation and support by the entire church body in accordance with Scriptures and the Grace Brethren Statement of Faith.
- (iii)** Those administering the baptism must be men approved by the Elders to administer the ordinance of baptism.
- (iv)** Baptism administered by Shepherd's Grace Church does not grant membership.
- (v)** Baptisms of believers by immersion by other churches and ministries will be recognized by Shepherd's Grace Church.

### (b) Communion Service

- (i)** The threefold Communion Service is considered to be a corporate event and led by pastors, Elders, or individuals approved by the Elders.
- (ii)** The Communion Service can be offered as part of small group worship led by designated leaders.

## **SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION**

- (iii)** A Bread and Cup observance can be included privately for those shut in by age or illness, as part of a wedding ceremony, or in a public setting such as a Sunday Morning Worship Service. Administration of the bread and cup will not be designated as a Communion Service.
- (iv)** Suitability for reception of communion should be self-governed unless a member is actively undergoing church discipline.
- (v)** Parents are responsible to determine their children's participation in communion.

### **Section 3.03 Resolutions**

The resolutions adopted by the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches are generally followed by this church to help clearly define what we believe and defend our practices. These resolutions will be reviewed annually by the Board of Elders of this church and included in Appendix B of this document. The Board of Elders may also choose to include additional resolutions.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Article IV. MEMBERS

### Section 4.01 Qualifications for Church Membership

Candidates for membership will be present themselves to the Senior Pastor or Elders for suitability based on the following qualifications. Membership shall be extended to all who have had and whose lives evidence a genuine experience of regeneration through faith in and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior; who renounce sin; who endeavor to live a consecrated life wholly unto the Lord; and upon compliance with any one of the following conditions:

- (a) Confessed belief in our Lord Jesus Christ with a verbal testimony of conversion
- (b) Participated in Christian baptism (by immersion in water) after conversion
- (c) Read and accepted our Statement of Faith (Section 3.01), agreed to follow the Constitution, and agreed to fulfill responsibilities of church membership.

### Section 4.02 Confirmation of New Members

Confirmation of new members will be by a verbal majority affirmation by the members present during a regularly scheduled Sunday morning service. Children of members will receive all of the benefits of membership. They do not assume the responsibilities of church membership until they turn eighteen years of age, at which point they must meet all of the qualifications for church membership and be confirmed as active members.

### Section 4.03 Responsibilities of Church Members

- (a) Members are expected to be faithful in all spiritual duties essential to the Christian Life
- (b) Participate in the communion ordinance
- (c) Be loyal to the church and regularly attend its services and business meetings
- (d) Contribute to its support and share in its organized work
- (e) Support the leadership of the church
- (f) Mutually care for the body of Christ
- (g) Resolve all conflict in accordance to the teaching of Matthew 18

### Section 4.04 Membership Status

- (a) **Active:** An active member is one who continues to fulfill the responsibilities of church membership (Section 4.03).

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

**(b) Remote:** an active member who, due to the following circumstances, is removed from proximity to the church and thus precluded from active service within the local body will remain on the active list but must be present to exercise voting privileges. Absentee and proxy voting will not be permitted except when noted in this constitution.

(i) serving in the armed forces

(ii) on missionary duty

(iii) away at school

(iv) other circumstances that interfere with the fulfillment of member responsibilities subject to approval by the Board of Elders

**(c) Voting:** an active member who is not under church discipline and is eighteen (18) years of age and older.

## Section 4.05 Church Discipline

**(a) The Purpose** of church discipline is to restore struggling or stumbling members to full fellowship in accordance with Galatians 6:1.

(i) Church members who are living inconsistently with Biblical teachings (as outlined but not limited to Article III, Doctrinal Position) have the privilege of gaining special encouragement, accountability, and teaching to assist them in the restoration process. Intervention by the church Elders, leaders, and congregation may all be employed in this process.

(ii) Regular attendees who are not members may also request and receive help in overcoming challenges they may be experiencing in remaining faithful in their walk with God. The church reserves the right to deny access to communion and/or fellowship opportunities to non-member regular attendees as seen fit by the Elders.

(iii) Church-related discipline for minor or dependent children is the responsibility of the parents or guardians unless intervention of the church is requested by the parents or guardians.

**(b) The Scope** of discipline in this church body will be to resolve the issue at the lowest level possible, following the teachings of conflict resolution found in Matthew 18:15-20.

(i) Communication of the discipline proceedings will be limited to only those who need to know (as determined by the Elders).

(ii) In keeping with this principle, letters of membership transfer will not be forwarded to other churches while a member is undergoing church discipline.

**(c) The Responsibility** of discipline will also be built upon Matthew 18 as the need for intervention moves beyond individual interactions.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

- (i) The Elders will be responsible for facilitating church discipline matters
  - (ii) Once a member has been brought to the Elders for consideration for discipline, the Elders are tasked with the disposition of each case until it is resolved.
  - (iii) The Elders will have responsibility of communicating to the congregation issues of church discipline as they see fit in a case-by-case basis.
  - (iv) It is the responsibility of the person undergoing discipline to remain faithful to the instruction and guidance leading to restoration.
- (d) The **Accountability** in church discipline will be accomplished by regular meetings for prayer and progress review conducted by the Elders with the individual(s) under discipline.
- (e) The **Method** of discipline may include denial of communion, limiting of participation in organized fellowship activities, denial of facility usage, limited or restricted attendance or participation in church business meetings, or termination of membership, or any other means which will bring about restoration to full fellowship.
- (f) **Termination** of discipline will take place when the progress outlined in the discipline has met the goals of the process or when the member has been removed from membership of the church.

## Section 4.06 Removal of Church Members

Members may be removed from the church roles in one of four ways:

- (a) By physical death.
- (b) By transfer: When it is requested, the Elders may grant to a departing member a letter of transfer to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The Elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church which, in their judgment, is unfaithful to the Gospel (Jude 3).
- (c) By withdrawal: The membership of any individual member shall automatically terminate without notice if the member in question has not attended a regular worship service of the church in the preceding six months or if an individual member holds membership in another church. Upon good cause being shown to the Board of Elders, this provision for termination may be waived in the case of any individual member at the discretion of the Board of Elders. Members may also request removal from the church roles in writing. If such withdrawn member applies again for membership, the procedures set forth in this Article will again be followed.
- (d) By dismissal as a final step of unresolved church discipline: If church discipline does not result in restoration, the Elders will call for congregational verbal majority affirmation of a recommendation for dismissal. The subject member(s) must be given two weeks notice of the meeting and the Elders' recommendation. The vote may be conducted even if the member(s) chose not to attend.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Article V. ORGANIZATION

### Section 5.01 General Guidelines for Ministry Operation

#### (a) Ministry Oversight

- (i) The **Elders** will provide spiritual leadership and will safeguard what is taught and preached. They provide the broad scope of the vision/direction of the church. They will equip and oversee the Deacons.
- (ii) The **Deacons** will direct the broad scope of their respective ministries. They will recruit, appoint, and oversee the Ministry Leaders and will propose and track the annual budget for their respective ministries.
- (iii) The **Ministry Leaders** are members who facilitate their respective ministry operations and recruit, appoint, and oversee the Ministry Coordinators. They have responsibility for implementation of approved budgets including purchases (based on funds availability) within their scope of ministry.
- (iv) The **Ministry Coordinators** are members who conduct the day-to-day operations of their respective ministries and will recruit and oversee the workers of these ministries.

(b) The **Ministry Council** consists of Pastoral Staff, Deacons and selected Ministry Leaders. The council's responsibilities include providing a forum for new ministry proposals, monitoring established ministries, serving as liaisons of ministries to Elders, reviewing budgets, and coordinating and communicating the annual calendar.

(c) **Specified Ministries** are intrinsic to who we are as a church, therefore, these ministries must be actively maintained by the church. These ministries must be led by a Deacon, Elder, Pastor, or Ministry Director (as described in Section 5.04). The specified ministries are defined as:

- (i) **Worship** – covers all aspects of scheduled worship services, administration of ordinances, and special events such as dedications, weddings and funerals.
- (ii) **Christian Education** –directed toward the goal of spiritual maturity for all ages.
- (iii) **Outreach/Missions** – taking the Gospel to the local community and the world via personal service and financial support.
- (iv) **Care** –addressing the needs within the local church body through formal and informal ministry by attending to the physical and spiritual well being of individuals and families.

(d) **Unspecified Ministries** are those that do not necessarily define who we are, and may be established and re-evaluated and/or discontinued based on the needs and resources available. This process is managed by the Ministry Council and subject to approval by Board of Elders.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Section 5.02 Elders

The Elders are men of God who provide spiritual leadership, feed the congregation through sound biblical preaching and teaching, and guard the congregation from false teaching and other potential threats. The title of "Elder" is more than an office. It is recognition by this congregation of the character and identity of a man who possesses Scriptural qualifications and a desire for ministry.

**(a) Qualifications** – The qualifications of Elders are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5. They must be men who have been exemplary members of the church for at least one year prior to the time of nomination and be willing to commit to the time needed to serve.

### **(b) Selection of Elders**

**(i)** Potential Elder candidates can be identified from among qualified men.

1. An individual identifies the calling of God on his life and presents himself to the Board of Elders for service, or an individual will be identified by the Board of Elders and approached about his desire to serve.
2. All potential candidates will be evaluated for their biblical qualifications and call for service by the Board of Elders. They will then be presented to the congregation for consideration as Elder candidates. A man becomes an Elder candidate with a simple majority vote from the congregation at an officially called business meeting. Two weeks prior to the vote to affirm candidacy, the Elders will request that any information which may disqualify the individual from serving as an Elder should be submitted to the Board of Elders in a written, signed note or via electronic mail.
3. The Elder candidate will fulfill the requirements for training as determined by the Board of Elders and develop an understanding of and be in agreement with our established model of church leadership (Section 2.01).

**(ii)** The Senior Pastor or a Ministry Pastor (as described in Section 5.04) will meet all qualifications for eldership prior to employment. When the candidate is confirmed as the Senior Pastor or a Ministry Pastor, he is simultaneously confirmed as an Elder.

**(iii)** Other staff members are not automatically considered to be Elders of the church. Determination for the suitability for eldership will be on a case by case basis by the Board of Elders. A staff member's educational history and experience may be reviewed and deemed as sufficient for meeting the training requirement.

**(iv)** The church must maintain a plurality of elders to meet the needs of the congregation.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

**(c) Confirmation** – Confirmation as an Elder to his first term of active service will be by a 75% affirmative vote of voting members present at an officially called business meeting. Reconfirmation to subsequent terms will be by a 75% affirmative vote of voting members present at an officially called business meeting.

- (i)** Once a candidate has completed the training requirement set by the Board of Elders, he will be presented to the congregation for confirmation. Two weeks prior to the Elder confirmation vote, the Board of Elders will again request that any information which may disqualify the individual from serving as an Elder should be submitted to them in writing.
- (ii)** When the candidate is confirmed as the Senior Pastor or a Ministry Pastor, he is simultaneously confirmed as an Elder.
- (iii)** Once the Board of Elders has determined that any other staff member meets all qualifications and training requirements to serve as an Elder, he will be presented to the congregation for final confirmation. This vote will occur in a business meeting called for that purpose. This vote must be separate from the congregational affirmation of the recommendation to call a man to a position, but may occur at the same meeting.
- (iv)** An inactive Elder is required to be reconfirmed before serving a term as an active Elder.

## **(d) Duration of Service**

- (i)** Elders retain that title for life so long as they remain scripturally qualified and retain the desire to be recognized as an Elder. Their terms of service and the commensurate responsibilities may vary over time.
- (ii)** Elders who are not in staff positions will serve three-year active terms. After two (2) consecutive terms, he will take a mandatory sabbatical period lasting one year. A sabbatical period may be waived by the Board of Elders if it would reduce the number of active Elders below the level necessary to serve the needs of the church.

## **(e) Responsibilities of Elders**

- (i) Active Elders** are those serving their elected terms. Their responsibilities will be to lead the congregation in the way they see God directing, oversee of the teaching and preaching ministries of the church, and serve to protect the flock from false doctrine while preserving unity within the flock and defending against attacks from without. Elders will be responsible for consistent examination of Scriptures, upholding and displaying the highest moral character, and ensuring that the affairs of the church are carried out in accordance with the Bible, and the Church Constitution. Elders will be expected to serve in ministries where direct Elder leadership has been deemed appropriate. The Elders will establish training requirements and operate a training program for Elder candidates. Elders who are not in staff positions will also act as the supervisory review board of the senior pastor. The specific responsibilities of the Senior Pastor position are detailed in Section 5.04 (e) Staff Responsibilities.

## SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

- (ii) All active Elders will comprise the **Board of Elders**. The Board will annually elect a chairman who will call and lead Elder board meetings, establish agendas, and lead in other areas designated in the constitution. A quorum of at least 75% of the active Elders must be present to transact official church business.
  - (iii) **Sabbatical Elders** will remain on the list of Elders, but will not be required to attend meetings of the Board of Elders or hold office in a ministry designated as an elder-led ministry. However, sabbatical Elders are required to maintain the Scriptural qualifications of Elders in their sabbatical year. Sabbatical Elders are encouraged to keep abreast of the issues and events taking place in the church.
  - (iv) **Inactive Elders** are those not currently serving a term as active Elders. They will be required to maintain Scriptural qualifications for Elders. An inactive Elder may be expected to update his training prior to returning to active service.
  - (v) The Board of Elders will be responsible for developing and implementing a method for holding one another accountable to their responsibilities to God, their families and the church.
- (f) **Removal** – Elders can resign by personal request or can be dismissed by a sixty-seven (67) percent majority vote for dismissal at an official business meeting called for the purpose dismissing an Elder. Grounds for dismissal may include determination that his life or beliefs are inconsistent with the Scriptures or the Constitution of the Church, or failing to fulfill the responsibilities of an Elder or Pastor as applicable. An official meeting to vote to dismiss an Elder could be called by the Board of Elders, a written petition signed by thirty (30) percent of the church members or by a vote of sixty-seven (67) percent of the Deacons. If an Elder behaves in such a way as to merit church discipline, removal from eldership will be the first act of discipline.

### Section 5.03 Deacons

Deacons are men and women called by the Holy Spirit and approved by the members of the church to serve and direct service in the church.

- (a) **Qualifications** – Deacon candidates will be carefully examined to determine their spiritual maturity, wisdom and servant spirit. I Tim 3:8-13 and Acts 6:3 will be used for the basis for the qualifying characteristics desired in a deacon. They must have been members of the church for at least one year prior to the time of nomination and be willing to commit to the time needed to serve.
- (b) **Selection** - Deacons may recommend themselves, or be nominated by an active member. All prospective Deacons will be evaluated and approved by the Board of Elders.
- (c) **Confirmation** of approved candidates will be by a majority vote of the voting members present at an officially called business meeting.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

**(d) Duration of Service** - Deacons will serve a term of up to three years with Elders evaluating each Deacon's continued adherence to qualifications and the meeting of ministry performance expectations. Reconfirmation of a Deacon to new term will be by recommendation of the Board of Elders affirmed by a majority vote of the congregation present at the Annual Business Meeting preceding the expiration of the current term.

**(e) Responsibilities** - Deacons will be responsible for selecting a Deacon Representative from their own ranks for the purpose of communication to the Board of Elders. Deacons will be responsible for the maintenance of all designated ministries of the church with each Deacon heading his or her respective ministry according to the position description for that ministry. Deacons will have leadership and serving responsibilities in the areas such as care, facilities, outreach/missions, finances, fellowship, and communications as outlined in the ministry plan. They will direct the broad ministry scope, recruit and supervise Ministry Leaders, be active in budget development and track spending. Deacons will be liaisons of their designated ministry (see Appendix C) to the Board of Elders through the coordination of the Deacon Representative. Deacons will also have responsibilities for setting up the logistics necessary for the administration of baptism and communion services.

**(f) Removal** - Deacons can resign by personal request or can be dismissed by a majority vote of the congregation at an official business meeting in affirmation of the Board of Elders recommendation if it is determined that his life or beliefs are inconsistent with the Scriptures, this Constitution, or they are not fulfilling the agreed upon responsibilities of their ministry area. If a Deacon's behavior or speech merits church discipline, removal from the Deacon position will be the first act of church discipline.

## Section 5.04 Staff

Staff members are individuals who work, regardless of compensation, according to a position description with an assigned set of duties. All compensated positions are subject to congregational approval of budgets. Positions include Senior Pastor, Ministry Pastor(s), Ministry Director(s), and Functional Staff (as delineated in the Responsibilities section below).

**(a) Qualifications** are relevant to the respective positions and clearly stated in position descriptions approved by the Board of Elders.

**(b) Selection** – The Board of Elders are responsible for selecting all staff. Pastoral positions will require a nominating committee's recommendation to the Board of Elders. The Elders' recommendation will be made to the congregation for a vote of approval. Ministry Directors will be recommended by the Board of Elders.

**(c) Confirmation** – Congregational approval is required for all Pastors and Ministry Directors. Confirmation will be by a 75% affirmative vote of voting members at an officially called business meeting. No congregational approval of individuals is necessary for functional staff.

**(d) Duration of Service** - Staff do not have a predefined duration of service.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## (e) Responsibilities

- (i) **Senior Pastor** - duties will be directed in accordance with the position description provided by the Board of Elders of the church. The Senior Pastor's primary responsibility, with the other Elders, is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. He will be faithful in the exposition of Scripture so that the congregation may grow in their understanding and application of the Word of God. His ministry is also to help protect the flock from false teaching and to unite the leadership in the shepherding of the flock. (Ephesians 4:11-14; Acts 20:28) The Senior Pastor will also be expected to fulfill the role of an Elder. If the Senior Pastor has not gone through the licensure/ordination process in another Grace Brethren Church with District examination, he must seek and attain FGBC licensure and recommendation for ordination from District Ministerium. The Senior Pastor is supervised by the Board of Elders.
- (ii) **Ministry Pastor** - duties will be directed in accordance with the position description provided by the Board of Elders of the church. If any Pastor has not gone through the licensure/ordination process in another Grace Brethren Church with District examination, they must seek and attain FGBC licensure and recommendation for ordination from District Ministerium. Ministry Pastors will also be expected to fulfill the role of an Elder. Ministry pastors will be supervised by the Senior Pastor, or in his absence the Board of Elders.
- (iii) **Ministry Director** – duties will be directed in accordance with the position description provided by the Board of Elders. Ministry Directors will be supervised by the Senior Pastor, or in his absence the Board of Elders.
- (iv) **Functional Staff** – each position will have a description approved by the Elders. The position description will clearly state to whom supervisory responsibilities are assigned. (Examples include, but are not limited to, administrative and maintenance personnel not working under a contract.)

## (f) Dismissal

- (i) **Senior Pastors and Ministry Pastors** – because they are Elders, dismissal will follow procedures for dismissal of Elders in section 5.02(f).
- (ii) **Ministry Directors** can be dismissed by their own personal request, or by a majority vote of voting members at an officially called business meeting in affirmation of the Board of Elders recommendation if it is determined that his/her life or beliefs are inconsistent with the Scriptures, the SGC Constitution, or they are not fulfilling the responsibilities agreed upon in their position description.
- (iii) **Functional Staff** can be dismissed by their own personal request or if the Board of Elders determines that they are not fulfilling the responsibilities agreed upon in their position description.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Section 5.05 Committees

The Elders may set up official church committees to serve in an advisory capacity to the Elders and/or congregation. As such, they have no inherent authority and their decisions are non-binding. Church committees are groups of people that initiate, organize, and oversee various aspects of our community of faith. Implementation, if any, will be carried out by specific church ministries. Committees are temporary by nature, created as needed to supplement activities of the Board of Elders and other areas of ministry. Committees exist to carry out specific short-term tasks. Examples of potential committees are Pastoral Search Committee, Personnel (Search/Interview) Committee, Nominating Committee, Constitution Committee, and Building/Property Committee.

**(a) Qualifications of Committee Members** - Members of official church committees must be voting members of the church. In rare cases, ad hoc committee members who are not members of the church may be appointed by the Board of Elders. Any such person must be of godly character, support the mission and purpose of the church, and also meet any other criteria that are deemed to be appropriate for the ministry. All committee members must have appropriate skills and spiritual gifts for the tasks of the committee. Those selected must be willing to commit the time needed to serve.

**(b) Selection of Committee Members** - Committee members will be carefully chosen based on spiritual maturity, talents, spiritual gifts and background. The Board of Elders will select a Committee Leader. Committee members will be appointed by the Committee Leader after receiving input from others such as the Board of Elders. Elders may be members of any committee.

**(c) Duration of Service** - The life cycle of a committee will generally be predetermined in the committee's charter. Committee members will generally be expected to serve for the full life of the committee.

**(d) Responsibilities** - Each committee must have a charter approved by the Board of Elders that defines a clearly stated purpose, a definition of whom they report to, and what they are to report or otherwise deliver. Each committee will have a leader (chair, facilitator, etc.). It is the responsibility of each committee leader to ensure that these items have been clearly defined and approved by the Elders. The leader will call and organize meetings. Committees may be created to do such things as: study specific questions for the purpose of presenting recommendations, complete short-term tasks in preparation of ministry events, or assist the Elders in completing a specific task. Committees are directly accountable to the Board of Elders or their designee. They may be asked to periodically report to the Board of Elders.

**(e) Dismissal** - Committees can be dismissed by the Board of Elders. Any committee member who is not properly functioning due to problems such as attendance, attitude, or ability to work cooperatively as a team member may be dismissed by the committee leader after a review by the Board of Elders or their designee.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Section 5.06 Trustees

Trustees are men and women who are the legal officers of the church serving as representatives of the church in business matters under the oversight of the Elders.

**(a) Qualifications** - those seeking positions requiring trustee qualification will be carefully examined to determine their spiritual maturity, wisdom and servant spirit. I Tim 3:8-13 and Acts 6:3 will be used for the basis for the qualifying characteristics desired in a Trustee. They must also meet any other criteria deemed appropriate for the specific area(s) in which they serve. They must have been active members of the church for at least one year prior to the time of nomination and be willing to commit to the time needed to serve.

**(b) Selection** – Trustees may recommend themselves or be recommended by any active member. All prospective Trustees will be evaluated and approved by the Board of Elders. The officers of the trustees (officers of the corporation) will be nominated by the trustees, and approved by the Board of Elders.

**(c) Confirmation** - will be by a majority vote of the voting members at an officially-called business meeting.

**(d) Duration of Service** – Trustees will serve a one-year term with Board of Elders evaluating each Trustee's continued adherence to qualifications and meeting ministry performance expectations. Reconfirmation of a Trustee to new term will be by recommendation of the Board of Elders and affirmed by a majority vote of the congregation present at the Annual Business Meeting.

### **(e) Responsibilities**

- (i) All Trustees** – The general responsibilities of Trustees as representatives of SGC to the State of Ohio include carrying out the instructions of this document and the State of Ohio in regard to church assets, funds, and liabilities up to the limits of the corporate assets. Trustees can obligate funds for the maintenance of this trust in accordance with budgets and resolutions passed by the church membership.
- (ii) President of the Corporation** – Will be directly responsible to the Elders and congregation. He is responsible for implementing the decisions of the church pertaining to property and other assets. He will have the power to call an internal audit of finances and property and maintain information pertaining to the value of real property.
- (iii) Vice President of the Corporation** – Functions as an assistant to the President and functions as President in his absence.
- (iv) Treasurer** – The responsibilities of the Trustee serving as Treasurer are defined in Section 5.07 (b).

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

- (v) **Recording Secretary** – Will have oversight of the all church records, church file plan, and records retention plan. Specific duties include: keeping of minutes for each official business meeting and recording those minutes in a safe, retrievable location; communicating any scheduled, called, or emergency meetings to the members; keeping an official record of membership; keeping accurate records of member status as defined in Section 4.04; informing the Elders, in advance, of the number of members necessary to satisfy the quorum requirement for each duly called meeting; notifying the Board of Elders of the pending expiration of positions requiring reconfirmation; filing incorporation paperwork with the State of Ohio as required; and responding to governmental petitions upon request of the Elders.

(f) **Removal** - Trustees can resign by personal request or can be dismissed by recommendation of the Board of Elders and affirmed by a majority vote of the congregation present at an official business meeting, if it is determined that his/her life or beliefs are inconsistent with the Scriptures, this Constitution, or they are not fulfilling the agreed upon responsibilities of their position. If a Trustee's behavior or speech merits church discipline, removal from the Trustee position will be the first act of church discipline.

## Section 5.07 Financial Management

- (a) The **Deacon of Finance** will have the responsibility of working with the ministry teams and Elders to calculate and manage the annual budget. He is responsible for the stewardship of the overall financial system of the church, including auditing of all records. He will manage accounts and investments. The Deacon of Finance may not also hold the position of Treasurer; however he may assume responsibility for counting the offerings in the absence of the Treasurer.
- (b) The **Treasurer** is a Trustee who records and maintains all cash receipts and disbursements. At least annually, per the procedural manual, he will post financial reports. He will assist the Deacon of Finance in the compilation of the annual budget and will have primary responsibility for counting the offerings.
- (c) The **Financial Secretary** is appointed by the Deacon of Finance and the Treasurer with approval of the Board of Elders. Responsibilities include recording and maintaining the personal giving.
- (d) **Counting the offerings** will be the conducted by the Treasurer and/or the Deacon of Finance. Weekly offerings shall be recorded separately as an official church record. No less than two persons will count the offerings and suitable counters can be selected from a pool of individuals pre-approved by the Board of Elders.
- (e) A Financial Policy shall be maintained to provide procedures for proper handling of all financial matters, including appropriate systems for accountability and checks and balances.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## **Section 5.08 Identification of Legal Officers Required by Incorporation**

- (a) The office of trustee at Shepherd's Grace Church may include Elders and those members elected to the position of Trustee per Section 5.06.
- (b) All legal and contractual documents or resolutions calling for entering into the same will be signed by a minimum of two trustees acting as agents of the church, taking no action without official consensus authorization of the Board of Elders.
- (c) Strictly to accommodate legal relationships in government and other matters outside the church, the President of the Corporation, the Vice President of the Corporation, the Recording Secretary will be identified from among the trustees. These officers are responsible to the state as such in the Articles of Incorporation filed with the State of Ohio as required.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Article VI. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

### Section 6.01 Business Meetings

- (a) The Annual Business Meeting will be set on a date set by the Chairman of the Board of Elders. At this meeting, the annual reports will be presented, the proposed annual budget voted on, recommended officers and trustees confirmed, and other business transacted as may properly come before the meeting. The Chairman of the Board of Elders will serve as moderator for the meeting.
- (b) Notice will be given at least two Sundays in advance to specify the time and place of the meeting. These announcements will be made in both written (such as letter, bulletin announcement, etc.) and verbal form.
- (c) A quorum is necessary for enacting church business. Attendance by at least fifty percent of the voting members will be necessary to constitute a quorum.
- (d) Except where otherwise noted in the constitution, congregational approval of a motion will be granted upon the affirmative vote of a majority of active members present at an officially-called business meeting.
- (e) The Recording Secretary is responsible for providing an accurate record of membership roles, ensuring that a quorum is attained, and ensuring that minutes are kept and filed.
- (f) Meetings will be generally governed by Roberts Rules of Order.

### Section 6.02 Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called when it is necessary to discuss or vote on issues facing the local body that are time sensitive (such as significant changes in the annual budget, confirmation and election of Pastors and Elders, dismissal of Pastor or Elder, or discussion of other issues that must be addressed). Except as noted below, special meetings will be conducted as business meetings (Section 6.01).

- (a) Special meetings may be called by the Board of Elders, or by a sixty-seven (67) percent affirmative vote of the Deacons, or by a written petition to the Recording Secretary with the signatures of thirty (30) percent of the voting members. A membership petition must state the purpose of the special meeting.
- (b) The reason for the special meeting must be given verbally during all Sunday morning worship services and published in written form at least two weeks before the meeting along with any supporting documentation that will assist the congregation in discussion or vote during the special meeting.
- (c) Special meetings may be called without the two week notice in the event that a condition or situation arises which is deemed an emergency by the Elders.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Article VII. Conflict Resolution

### Section 7.01 Conflict within the Church

- (a) The **Purpose** of Conflict Resolution is to promote peace and unity within the local church.
- (i) Any church member or regular attendee who is experiencing conflict with another member or regular attendee may avail themselves to the encouragement, accountability, and teaching of the Elders, Deacons, or Staff to assist them in the resolution of the conflict.
  - (ii) Conflict resolution involving minor or dependent children is the responsibility of the parent(s) or guardian(s) unless intervention of the church is requested in writing by the parent(s) or guardian(s).
- (b) The **Scope** of conflict resolution within this church body will be to resolve the issue at the lowest level possible, applying the relevant principles of church discipline found in Matthew 18:15-20. Communication of any proceedings will be limited to only those with a need to know.
- (c) The **Responsibility** of conflict resolution remains with the parties involved (Matthew 5:23-24). Participation in the resolution process by Elders, Deacons or Staff generally will be at the invitation of the parties. Intervention may be initiated by Elders, Deacons or Staff if they feel the peace and unity of the church is being compromised.
- (d) **Termination** of conflict resolution will be with the success of the intervention or may be transitioned into a church discipline process (Titus 3:10-11).

### Section 7.02 Conflicts with Churches, District and National Fellowship

Should a conflict arise between Shepherd's Grace Church and another church, the Northeast Ohio District, or the National Fellowship, assistance will be sought from neutral parties from among these organizations.

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Article VIII. GENERAL ITEMS

### Section 8.01 Authorization and Approval of the Constitution

This Constitution will remain in force as presently formulated or as duly amended according to Section 8.02 until this corporation is duly dissolved. This Constitution will not be suspended or nullified.

### Section 8.02 Amendments to the Constitution

This Constitution may be amended at an officially called church meeting per Article VI. Congregational approval will be granted by a sixty-seven (67) percent affirmative vote of the total number of voting members. Absentee ballots will be provided on request to voting members for Constitution Amendments. Appendices are not subject to the Constitutional Amendment process.

### Section 8.03 Ownership and Confidentiality of Church Records

All records are the property of the church and must be kept in the church office when not in use. All officers and staff shall surrender all records in their possession to the Recording Secretary at the close of their term of office or employment to be filed as a permanent record of the work of the church. The majority of church records are available for individual or congregational review. As dictated by the State of Ohio and for the benefit of the church and its members, some church records may be identified as "confidential." If a church record is identified as "confidential," requests to view those records must be submitted in writing to the Board of Elders. Decisions for release will be made by the Elders in consultation with the person responsible for the record. Submitting a request does not guarantee the release of the record. Records for the following activities of the church or individuals will be retained and filed as Confidential Church Records:

- (a) Church discipline or conflict resolution
- (b) Personnel records, including hiring, performance evaluation or firing of any employee or uncompensated staff member
- (c) Formal or informal counseling of any member or employee
- (d) Financial contributions of any individual or family regardless of membership status
- (e) Church membership listings or directories will not be released outside the church nor may they be used by members for soliciting for non-church business
- (f) Any other records which the Board of Elders may determine to be kept confidential in the best interests of the church

# SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## Section 8.04 Indemnification

Shepherd's Grace Church will indemnify and hold harmless any and all officers, Elders, Deacons, Trustees or Staff for any expenses actually and necessarily incurred in connection with any action, suit or proceeding against said officers, Elders, Deacons, Trustees or Staff. This indemnification will include costs for attorney fees. This indemnification will occur as the expenses are incurred and in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit or proceeding, on receipt a promise from officers, Elders, Deacons, Trustees or Staff to: (1) repay the amount advanced if it proved by clear and convincing evidence in court that the conduct of the officers, Elders, Deacons, Trustees or Staff involved a deliberate intent to injure the church's best interest, (2) reasonably cooperate with the church in connection with the action, suit or proceeding.

This indemnification will be available to any officer, Elder, Deacon, Trustee or Staff which is made or thereafter to be made a part to any action, suit or proceeding because of the person's position within the church. Persons who are officers, Elders, Deacons, Trustees or Staff at the time of being made a party, or threatened with being made a party to any action, suit or proceeding, or were officers, Elders, Deacons, Trustees or Staff at the time of the event(s) complained of in any such action, suit or proceeding, will be allowed indemnification. Indemnification will also be available in criminal actions only if it is found that the officer, Elder, Deacon, Trustee or Staff had no reasonable cause to believe that the subject acts were unlawful.

## Section 8.05 Property and Assets

(a) The church will have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Ohio and is deemed necessary for the functioning of the church, and will have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, bill of sale, deed or otherwise. All property will be held in the name of the church.

(b) In case of division of the church caused by conflict, all property and assets of the church will be held in trust by those who abide by this Constitution for the continued operation and function of the church.

(c) Any sale or other disposition of the main Shepherd's Grace Church facility at 2325 Medina Road or the purchase or sale of any other real estate will be recommended by the Board of Elders and approved by a sixty-seven (67) percent affirmative vote of the total number of voting members eighteen (18) years of age and older. Absentee ballots will be provided on request to voting members for real estate transactions.

**Section 8.06 Dissolution of the Church** - The church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by a sixty-seven (67) percent affirmative vote of the total number of voting members, or when the church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than six members remain. In the event of dissolution of Shepherd's Grace Church, an audit will be prepared by a certified accounting firm appointed by another Grace Brethren Church in the North Eastern Ohio (NEO) District of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches. This audit will list the remaining assets and liabilities of the Church and such audit will be submitted to the remaining members of the Trustees, Deacons, and Elders. The beneficiary of the assets will be the NEO district for the purpose of church planting within the District. Dissolution will be conducted in accordance with existing tax codes governing not for profit organizations.

# **SHEPHERD'S GRACE CHURCH CONSTITUTION**

## **APPENDIX A: TERMINOLOGY**

None of the positions in this document, other than Elder, is intended to have gender limitations. The use of gender-specific personal pronouns does not imply gender limitations.

## **APPENDIX B: RESOLUTIONS**

To be added by the Board of Elders (preferably before business meeting)

## **APPENDIX C: DESIGNATED MINISTRY AREAS**

To be added by the Board of Elders (preferably before business meeting)