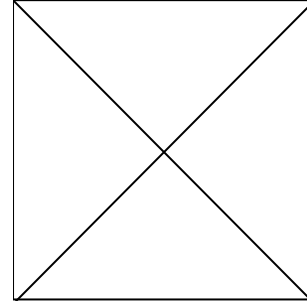


Staunton Grace Covenant Church Constitution



Article I - Name and Location

The name of this local church shall be Staunton Grace Covenant Church and the principle place of business is located in Augusta County, Virginia.

Article II - Purpose

Staunton Grace Covenant Church is exclusively Christian and its purpose is to provide worship of God, opportunity for Christian maturity through preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, celebration of the sacraments, teaching, and fellowship, to edify believers, to reach out with the message of the gospel to the community and to serve the world. It is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code (or the corresponding provisions of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

Article III - Membership

Membership in Staunton Grace Covenant Church shall be open to any regenerated persons who accept the teachings of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, in theory and practice, and will covenant with the local church.

Article IV - Tenets of Faith

This local church accepts the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and affirms all the statements of faith of the traditional Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

Article V - Government

The oversight of this local church - spiritual, educational, temporal - shall rest in the local Network (hereafter referred to as the Session), consisting of a presiding elder and other elders.

Article VI - Property

Staunton Grace Covenant Church shall have the right to acquire through purchase, gift, exchange or otherwise, such property, real and personal, as may be deemed necessary for carrying out the general purposes of this local church; to sell, bequeath, loan, or otherwise dispose of property belonging to the local church; to receive monies through gifts, offerings, tuition, legacies, grants and loans as deemed necessary; and to exercise all the rights and privileges granted by law to religious organizations. No part of its net income may inure to the benefit of private individuals. All property, real or personal, shall be taken, held, sold, transferred, or conveyed in the name of the Trustees of Staunton Grace Covenant as registered in Augusta County Circuit Court. There shall be three or more trustees who also may be elders.

Article VII - Dissolution

This local, non-profit church is organized pursuant to the laws of the State of Virginia. The property of this local church is irrevocably dedicated to religious and charitable purposes, and upon liquidation, dissolution, or abandonment, after all financial liabilities have been paid in full, all the assets shall be distributed by the trustees to an organization, foundation, or fund organized and operated for religious purposes, and which subscribes to the same tenets of faith as Article IV above, and is operated for the purposes specified in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or the corresponding provisions of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

Article VIII - Amendments

The Constitution of this church may be amended, changed or added to by unanimous consent of the local church Session after such proposed action has been submitted to the Leadership Council and the congregation for their comment. A period of not less than one month shall be given for review; except that Article IV may not be amended or deleted.

(Note, additions to the belief statement in Article IV such as a statement of opposition to recognition of homosexual marriage, or genetic manipulation can be added to the by-laws, if necessary).

Article IX - Non-Political

There will be no substantial part of the activities of this church in the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and will not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing and distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. Individual members of the church are not restricted in any way from involvement in legislative activities or the political process.

Article X - Statement of Affiliation

Staunton Grace Covenant Church enters into covenant relationship with the directors, members and member churches of Grace Network for the purpose of mutual edification, accountability, and cooperation in the service of the gospel and assumes the privileges and responsibilities, including financial obligations, of membership in Grace Network.

Staunton Grace Covenant Church By-Laws

It is the express desire of this church to follow, as nearly as possible, New Testament church

structure. Since the Holy Spirit brings fresh light upon the Scripture as our knowledge of Him increases, we do not believe that this constitution and by-laws has found that perfect pattern. In order to make room for any new move of the Spirit of God, we wish to provide here only minimal structural guidelines by dealing with principles rather than details. This church is intended to center upon our relationship in love and unity to each other and our mutual needs and purposes.

We believe that ultimate control of the church is from God and that church government should be a theocracy. God, however, expects and requires prayer from His people in order to perform His highest good. Through prayer God will raise up anointed leadership through which His dominion is exercised. We recognize ourselves as a local church of Christians in fellowship with the Body of Christ, for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a place for the worship of our Lord Jesus Christ, to assume our share of responsibility and privilege of propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ by all available means, both at home and abroad, and we adopt the following by-laws and agree to be governed by them.

Article I - Officers and Government

This church shall follow the scriptural pattern of government as we understand it and shall be based on mutual trust and love. We recognize Jesus Christ as the Head of this Church (the Body). Oversight of this local church is vested through delegation in a plurality of mutually submitted elders.

Officers in this local church shall consist of a Presiding Elder, Elders, Home Group Leaders, Deacons, Trustees, and others as set in this local church by the Holy Spirit and as authorized by these by-laws.

Section A: Elders

This church recognizes the fivefold ministries of

Ephesians 4:11; Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers, as gifts of God to the entire body of Christ. The word "overseer" or "bishop" describes the work of an elder. Qualifications of elders shall be set forth as in I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They shall be born-again Spirit-filled men who have been set in a covenant relationship in the local body by the Holy Spirit and are expressing a sense of strong responsibility for the unity of the body and its welfare and ministries. The Session, which is made up of the local elders, shall be responsible for the spiritual welfare and oversight of this church. They must also be responsive and open to the needs and feelings of the people.

We recognize that God ordains a head or leader for each of his institutions, both in families and churches. Therefore, there will be a presiding or head elder who will serve in this capacity in this local church. The presiding elder, who will also be called senior pastor, shall have special charge of the pulpit ministry along with the general oversight for the entire church.

Item 1: Appointment and Terms of Elders

The initial elders shall be appointed by the senior pastor with the consultation of the other recognized leadership and the congregation. They shall be ordained and set into office by the senior pastor. Additional elders as directed by the Lord shall be appointed by the Session with the consultation of the Leadership Council and the congregation. The newly appointed elders will be ordained and set into office by the existing Session.

The number of elders shall be determined by the Session. Elders are to serve an indefinite term. A sabbatical system will be established whereby an elder may enjoy a sabbatical period, wherein he is relieved of his duties as an elder for up to one calendar year, to be resumed at the end of that period. Elders may resign if they believe they are not to continue and must resign if they are unable to fulfill Item 2 of this section and/or they

terminate their membership with this local church. An elder may be removed from office by the consensus of the remaining elders if there are biblical grounds for his dismissal. The senior pastor may also be removed by the unanimous consent of all the other elders and the consensus of the Leadership Council.

If the senior pastor resigns, is removed from office, or dies, the Session will select through prayer, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the consultation of the Leadership Council, a godly anointed man possessing the qualities of an elder as set forth in these by-laws and will install this man into the office of Presiding Elder/Senior Pastor. This installation will be by the various gift ministers this local Session recognizes and invites to participate. This does not preclude the Session from appointing an interim pastor for an indefinite period while the search for a new pastor goes forward. The interim pastor will serve an indefinite term until a new pastor is chosen, or the interim resigns or is removed by Session. Installation or removal of an interim shall be by majority vote of the Session after consultation with the Leadership Council. The interim pastor may be chosen to fill the role of regularly installed pastor if so recognized and appointed by the Session in consultation with the Leadership Council.

Item 2: Relationship of Elders

Since God has brought us into a covenant relationship with Himself, and since this covenant is sealed by the shed blood of Jesus, we are made brothers in Christ and are so bound in every attitude toward each other. Elders are to be an example to the church of this covenant relationship by being joined together in one accord by love and commitment to one another. Thus they become the pattern of a "building fitly framed together growing into a habitation of God through the Spirit."

Unity among elders shall be considered of such importance that should an elder be considered

guilty of violating or breaking this covenant relationship he may be disciplined or dismissed as an elder by the rest of the Session.

Item 3: Resolution of Conflict and Appealing a Termination

In the event that a question, conflict, or difference of understanding between the elders cannot be resolved, by the initiation of the presiding elder, a reconciliation team of three members will be chosen out of and by the Leadership Council to hear the matter and offer an opinion. If the Session does not accept the opinion, then the matter will be submitted to an arbitration team from Grace Nnetwork. The decision of the Grace Network arbitration team shall be binding upon all persons involved.

If the presiding elder, or an elder is removed from office and he believes it is unfair or improper, he may appeal the removal by requesting a hearing. An arbitration team of three people will be chosen by and out of the Leadership Council who will review the reasons for the dismissal and render a decision. If either party does not accept the decision, then the session shall submit the decision to an arbitration team from Grace Network. The decision of this arbitration team shall be binding and final.

Item 4: Other Responsibilities of Elders.

Operational policies and guidelines, membership requirements, discipline, and other procedures not covered by these by-laws shall be decided upon by the elders. The elders shall appoint home group leaders, deacons, trustees, and other positions or ministries as deemed necessary for the proper functioning of the local church. The term of office and the powers delegated are at the discretion of the Session. Any action of the Session may be taken upon a majority vote of the Session, except as otherwise provided by these by-laws.

The elders shall be responsible for the

determination of need, selection and the supervision of salaried positions. They shall set the salary, benefits, and other compensation of said personnel. However, if the majority of the Session or their relatives are salaried, then a Salary Review Board made up of other than church salaried personnel shall be appointed by the Session to recommend salaries, benefits and other compensation to the Session for their approval.

Section B: Small Group Leaders

This church recognizes that the New Testament pattern of church life includes some type of home group and/or small group fellowship. Therefore, at the discretion of the Session, small groups may be established and leaders appointed. The small group leaders will serve the elders as under-pastors in looking after and ministering to the portion of the congregation in their charge. Qualifications for Small Group Leaders shall be as set forth in I Tim. 3:1-7 and shall be born-again, Spirit-filled members of this congregation. They shall serve an indefinite term, until voluntary resignation or removal by the Session. The Small Group Leaders shall serve on the Leadership Council.

Section C: Deacons

To assist the elders in ministering to the needs of the local congregation, deacons shall be chosen from the local body for specific tasks of ministry in service and publicly installed to their tasks by the elders. Qualifications of deacons shall be as set forth in I Tim. 3:8-13. They shall be born-again, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. They shall minister to the needs in the congregation, look after the property as directed by Session, assist in keeping order, and in ministering at services. They shall serve an indefinite term, until voluntary resignation or removal by the Session. Deacons shall serve on the Leadership Council.

Section D: Special Gifts and Ministries

Those who have special gifts and ministries which

are edifying to the church may be appointed and/or ordained to a position or office by the Session as deemed necessary to the proper functioning of the local church. They shall serve an indefinite term, until voluntary resignation, or removal by the Session and shall be members of the Leadership Council.

Section E: Trustees

There shall be three or more trustees who also may be elders. The trustees shall be active members of Staunton Grace Covenant Church. They shall attend to all legal affairs in connection to the property of the church, as instructed by Session and shall be members of the Leadership Council.

Section F: Secretary and Treasurer

There shall be a Secretary and a Treasurer each of whom may be an elder and one or more Assistant Secretaries and Treasurers, to be appointed by the Session for an indefinite term, until voluntary resignation, or removal by the Session. The Secretary shall keep a record of the minutes and perform any other duties related to the office. The Treasurer shall be entrusted with the finances of this church, and shall keep an itemized account of all the receipts and disbursements of all monies received. The Treasurer and/or his or her assistants shall make all disbursements and reports as directed by Session. The Treasurer shall establish bank accounts requiring the signature of the Treasurer or assistants or other authorized persons. The Treasurer or any others who are authorized to sign checks may not approve or sign checks made out to himself/herself or to his/her benefit.

Section G: Leadership Council

There shall be a Leadership Council consisting of all Elders, Home Group Leaders, Deacons, specially appointed ministries, the Trustees, and others as appointed by Session. The moderator of the Leadership Council shall be the Presiding

Elder. The Council shall serve the Session in giving input and suggestions, researching matters as directed and reporting the findings and recommendations, confirming directions, plans, and appointments, and providing reconciliation or arbitration teams to help if conflicts arise. The Leadership Council shall meet as directed by the Session. Any action the Leadership Council may be authorized to take by Session, or these by-laws, shall be by majority vote of the Leadership Council as defined above.

Article II – Membership

Section A: Qualifications

The membership of this church shall be composed of persons who name Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who have received water baptism, who subscribe to the constitution and by-laws of this church, who believe God has called them to be members of Staunton Grace Covenant Church, and who will submit their lives in covenant relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, the leadership, the other members and the vision of this church. The session will set requirements and expectations for membership and validate membership into Staunton Grace Covenant Church.

Section B: Responsibilities

Members are expected to share in the life of the local body in a covenant of love, unity, fellowship, and mutual encouragement. They shall pursue duties and privileges essential to the Christian life according to the Word of God, including a lifestyle of holiness, worship, service, and support of the church.

Section C: Discipline, Termination, Restoration

Should a member fail to meet the responsibilities outlined in Article II, Section A & B, the Elders may discipline the member. If the member still fails to respond and follow the commitments of

membership the member may be excommunicated by the Session. Since excommunication is always for the good of the church and the person excommunicated, the restoration of the person is desired once true repentance is realized. At that time the person may request re-admission to the church and this may be granted by the eldership.

Other membership termination may be by voluntary transfer of membership to another church at which time this church shall issue a letter of transfer of membership if requested. Persistent and long-term voluntary withdrawal from the fellowship of this church and its activities and life may also result in termination of membership by the Session.

Article III - Meetings

The church shall hold a variety of regular meetings for worship, teaching, and fellowship. There shall be at least one annual business meeting. The business meeting(s) shall be called by the Session and shall include annual reports of finances and other pertinent information.

Article IV - Division

In case of a major division of the church membership, the church property shall belong to those who abide by the constitution and by-laws. If this cannot be clearly determined and agreed upon, the following provision is made: In case of conflict or dispute arising between or among any two or more groups of persons who are members of this church, including those in leadership in the church, the disputing persons shall first undertake to resolve the matter in personal and private confrontation(s), as commanded in the fifth and eighteenth chapters of Matthew, seeking to be reconciled with one another. If resolution and reconciliation do not result, then the matter will be handled as outlined in Item 3 of Section A of Article I of these by-laws. The decision of the Grace Presbytery arbitration team will be final and

binding.

Article V – Amendments

Amendments to these by-laws may be by unanimous consent of the Session after such proposed action has been submitted to the Leadership Council and the congregation for their comment. A period of not less than one month shall be given for review.

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