

THE CONSTITUTION
and
DECLARATION OF ASSOCIATION
of the
Covenant of Grace Church

ESTABLISHED IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 2004

Preamble

SECTION 1

The establishment of this church is based on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ according to the Bible. The first commandment states: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The Church has no other head or authority but Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:15). Hence the sole jurisdiction for all matters pertaining to life, faith, and practice are exclusively adjudicated by the authority invested in the ecclesiastical government (Matthew 18:15-18) with the Bible as the final authority and standard.

**Article One
Name of Church**

SECTION 1

The name of this church is the Covenant of Grace Church (COGC). It is located in New Hartford, Connecticut.

**Article Two
The Legal Status of the Church of Jesus Christ**

SECTION 1

This church recognizes Jesus Christ as her only Sovereign Head; thereby she will remain an unlicensed, unregistered, and unincorporated church.

SECTION 2

COGC has formed under the protection of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which guarantees the rights of freedom of religion, freedom of religious exercise, freedom of association, and the freedom of speech and expression. These God-given rights are not only protected by the Constitution from federal involvement, but are also protected under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States from State entanglement. The Constitution of Connecticut articulates these rights as well, particularly in Article First, Section Three and Article Seven 'Of Religion'.

SECTION 3

The church will seek to live in peace with the civil magistrate, as it is a minister of God for good (Romans 13:1-7). However, in the instance that the magistrate seeks to compel the church to disobey the law of God, then the church must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). The federal and/or state governments have no jurisdictional authority over

the Church of Jesus Christ and can make no decisions concerning Biblical law and how the Church lives out her obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word.

Article Three Denominational Membership

SECTION 1

COGC is a Particular Church in the Covenant Presbyterian Church (CPC) denomination.

SECTION 2

COGC will abide by and submit to the CPC's Constitution, Form of Church Government (FOCG), Book of Discipline, and Directory for the Public Worship of God. If there are any discrepancies between the Constitution of the COGC and the CPC, the documents of the CPC shall take precedent.

Article Four Purpose of this Church

SECTION 1

The purpose of this church shall be the worship of God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We exist to preach the 'whole counsel of God' (Acts 20:27) for the edification, instruction, and discipline of her members. The church, through her members, has the responsibility to be involved in every aspect of life in the building of the Kingdom of God. Finally, because much of the current battle confronting the Church of Jesus Christ involves the Satanic conspiracy to annihilate the Christian family and, in doing so, destroy its influence for good within the Church and the broader culture, we do purpose to establish a local church committed to the wedding of orthodoxy and orthopraxy; one which will seek to take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5); to strive to build strong families; to train men for leadership and to flee ungodliness; to affirm women in their honorable and biblical roles as wives, mothers, and helpmeets (Genesis 2:18, Titus 2:1-5); to advance the cause of distinctively biblical education (Psalm 78:1-8); to promote a godly view of culture and family life (Exodus 20:1-17); to defend the biblical view of the blessing of children (Genesis 1:28, Psalm 127); and to cry out to the Lord for the turning of the hearts of fathers to their children, and the children to their fathers (Malachi 4:6).

Article Five Statement of Faith

SECTION 1

COGC adheres to the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 along with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as our doctrinal standards. This is consistent with the standards maintained by the Reformed Churches throughout Christendom.

SECTION 2

The COGC maintains the following Reformed doctrinal distinctives:

- 1. Sola Scriptura, Solus Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Soli Deo Gloria*
- 2. We acknowledge a literal six consecutive day creationist view of Genesis*

3. *We embrace the biblical view of family. To this end, we practice head-of-household voting; encourage family-integrated church practices; embrace the clear teaching of Scripture on the definition of marriage, that it is a union of one man with one woman, with marriage remaining under the jurisdiction of the Family and Church; support a pro-life stand on abortion; and we acknowledge that all theories and actions of homosexuality are violations of Scripture*
4. *We reject all forms of humanistic teachings and practices.*

Article Six Christian Education

SECTION 1

COGC shall encourage all members to provide their children with a thoroughly Christian education. To that end, we encourage all households to home school or provide their children with alternative Christian education. COGC will promote the Biblical position that education is the responsibility of the parents, particularly the father (Deuteronomy 6:5-12) and that education of our covenant children is to the glory of God (Psalm 1:1-3). Parents who choose to have their children educated by private or public schools must remain doubly vigilant and are encouraged to remove their children from these institutions if they exhibit beliefs or practices which are inconsistent with Biblical Christianity.

Article Seven Elders and Deacons

SECTION 1

For information concerning Eldership see the FOCG, chapter 6 ELDERS – PASTORS, PREACHERS, TEACHERS, & BISHOPS, chapter 10 THE PARTICULAR CHURCH & ITS SESSION, and chapter 18 EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION.

SECTION 2

The Session shall oversee the development of and implementation of Deacon Ministry within COGC as per the FOCG, chapter 8 DEACONS.

SECTION 3

Any voting members may nominate a male head of household for Eldership, submitting this nomination to the Clerk of the Session in writing. Upon nomination the Session shall inform the Candidate of his nomination and give the Candidate a copy of the Nomination Guidelines of the CPC which outlines the definition, responsibilities, and qualifications of Eldership.

SECTION 4

If the Candidate desires to begin seeking Eldership in the CPC, he must answer all the questions in Appendix A of the FOCG and submit them to the Session.

SECTION 5

The Session shall then begin mentoring the Candidate to determine whether he is called, qualified, and desirous to be an Elder in the CPC. After this initial screening, the

Session shall inform the congregation the Candidate is being considered for Eldership. The Session shall examine and work with the candidate to ascertain the individual's qualifications, areas of strengths and weakness, and so forth, in order to formulate a recommendation to the candidate and the heads of household.

SECTION 6

The Session shall present the Candidate to the heads of household. The heads of household shall vote whether to recommend the Candidate to the CPC for Eldership. The Candidate needs a majority vote in order to be recommended to the CPC for Eldership.

SECTION 7

Elders ordained in the CPC must be installed into the COGC by majority vote by the heads of household.

SECTION 8

The COGC shall have a perpetual Eldership.

SECTION 9

Elders may take a Sabbatical. The terms and length of the Sabbatical shall be worked out with the Session.

SECTION 10

One or more Elder may serve the congregation in full-time or part-time ministry. Salary, housing allowance, medical coverage, retirement and any other financial remuneration shall be set by the Session and reported to the heads of household. An historical financial report and budget of COGC shall be reported to the heads of household on at least an annual basis.

SECTION 11

The Session shall provide regular opportunities for men of the church to increase in their knowledge of the Scriptures directly, through the implementation of classes and seminars, and/or indirectly, through the purchase of training courses, educational materials, etc. (see Appendix C of the FOCG for recommendations of reading lists and course possibilities).

Article Eight Admission of Church Members

SECTION 1

As stated in Chapter 16 in the FOCG, a member may be received by a profession of faith. Those who are members of another congregation may be received by a letter of transfer or its equivalent. Those wishing to transfer from another church of like faith and practice which has been approved by the Session or regional Presbytery should still be examined by the Session. In all cases, the transfer will be affected when the members are publicly received in front of the congregation.

SECTION 2

Non-professing children of adult members are received into the membership of the Church upon receiving holy baptism. Non-professing, baptized children are to be received as members along with their parent(s) or guardian(s). Non-professing, unbaptized children must be brought forward to receive holy baptism in order to be accounted members of the Church along with their parent(s) or guardian(s).

SECTION 3

Before permitting any one to make profession of his faith or take membership vows in the presence of the congregation, the Session shall examine him in order to assure itself so far as possible that he possesses the doctrinal knowledge requisite for active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian life.

SECTION 4

As a way of assisting those who contemplate becoming members of the Church by making public profession of faith in Christ, the Session may conduct classes in Christian doctrine to help them understand the implication of this significant act and perform it intelligently and sincerely.

SECTION 5

The Session shall examine the candidate for membership to ascertain if he:

- A) possesses the knowledge requisite for an active faith and obedient walk in the Lord Jesus Christ;*
- B) relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone;*
- C) confesses a hearty trust in Christ for the forgiveness of his sins;*
- D) places his hope of everlasting righteousness and salvation in God's grace; and*
- E) is resolved to live a Christian life by the grace of God.*

SECTION 6

The weakest measure of faith is to be accepted in those who desire to be admitted into the Church. Weak Christians, if sincere, have the substance of that faith, repentance and holiness which is required in Church members and such have most need of the ordinances for their confirmation and growth in the faith.

SECTION 7

When the Session is satisfied that an individual is qualified to make public profession of faith in Christ, his name shall be publicly announced to the congregation at least one week before the day chosen for this solemn event, in order that the members may have opportunity to acquaint the Session with such facts concerning him as may appear to be irreconcilable with a sincere profession. The Session shall weigh such evidence and determine its validity.

SECTION 8

The Session shall acquire jurisdiction after they have voted to receive the new member.

SECTION 9

A member involved in a trial or under discipline may transfer to another Particular Church within the CPC. The Session shall acquire jurisdiction after they have voted to receive him into membership and the congregation has been apprised by public announcement. The member's status must transfer without any changes in the censure or abrogation of rights and privileges if not under censure. No rights or privileges shall be abrogated until 1) any pending appellate process has been exhausted by the broadest CPC court to which a complaint can be made, or 2) new proceedings have been initiated and completed.

SECTION 10

All the rights and privileges of membership belong to covenant members. Such rights and privileges shall not be qualified by the filing of any complaint, until the complaint is sustained by the broadest CPC court to which a complaint can be made.

Article Nine Head of Household Voting

SECTION 1

As per the FOCG, Chapter 15, Section 6, voting and floor privileges shall be restricted to male members of the congregation who are at least 20 years of age, who are in good and regular standing and who have, before the Session and other witnesses, answered the following questions in the affirmative:

- 11. Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ to be the perfect and only true way for a man to be saved? Do you?*

- 22. Do you confess that because of your sinfulness, you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation, not in yourself, but in the Lord Jesus Christ alone? Do you?*

- 33. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve Him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and to lead a godly life? Do you?*

- 4. Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, share in its worship and ministry through your prayers and gifts as you are able, offer your study and service, and so fulfill your calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? Will you?*

- 5. Will you devote yourself to the church's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers? Will you?*

- 6. Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of the Covenant Presbyterian Church and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or practice, to heed its discipline? Do you?*

SECTION 2

Widows and other female heads of household should be encouraged to make known their wishes to the Session, which shall then designate one or more Elders to weigh their input in making their own congregational vote or speaking on the floor.

**Article Ten
Nature and Operation**

SECTION 1

It shall be the right of COGC to purchase, acquire, own, pledge, sell, assign, transfer, or otherwise dispose of, invest in, trade in, deal in, or acquire goods, wears, merchandise, real property, personal property, and services of every kind and description; to conduct business in, to have one or more offices, residences for full time ministers, and buy, sell, convey, lease, or otherwise dispose of real and personal property. Churches have a legal right under the First Amendment to conduct business in the United States of America without being a 501(c)3 corporation.

**Article Eleven
Dissolution of the Church**

SECTION 1

COGC shall be a perpetual Association with the right to terminate her existence by three quarters vote of heads of household and consent of her Session. In the event that COGC seeks to dissolve her Association and terminate her existence, the residual assets of the Association will be conveyed to a church of choice in the Covenant Presbyterian Church determined by the Session.

**Article Twelve
Amending the Constitution**

SECTION 1

Amendments to this Constitution and Declaration of Association of the COGC may be recommended by any voting member to the Session. Upon approval by the Session, proposed amendment will be presented to the heads of household. Changes and amendments can only be made by a majority vote of the heads of household.