

Penn Valley Church Constitution



Penn Valley Church
"Experience His Grace"

Adopted April 2, 2000

PENN VALLEY CHURCH

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this church shall be Penn Valley Church, A Grace Brethren Ministry.

ARTICLE II. COVENANT

The covenant by which this church exists as a distinct body, and which every member accepts, is as follows:

Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures (believing them to be inerrant in the original manuscript) as our rule of faith and practice, we recognize the privilege and duty of uniting ourselves for Christian fellowship, the enjoyment of Christian ordinances, the public worship of God, and the advancement of Christ's church on earth. We do now, in the sight of God and invoking His blessing, solemnly covenant and agree with each other to associate ourselves as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as warranted by the Word of God.

We agree to maintain the teaching and preaching of the Word of God, to submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of the church and to walk together in brotherly love. This we do depending on the aid of our heavenly Father, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for our salvation, and of Jesus Christ who has redeemed us with His blood, and of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide.

ARTICLE III. STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Statement of Faith which this church shall embrace, preach, and defend is specifically set forth in the “Statement of Faith” as follows:

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, by God (2 Timothy 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 Corinthians 13:14).
3. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST: His pre-existence and deity (John 1:1-3), incarnation by virgin birth (John 1:14; Matthew 1:18-23), sinless life (Hebrews 4:15), substitutionary death (2 Corinthians 5:21), bodily resurrection (Luke 24:36-43), ascension into Heaven and present ministry (Hebrews 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 indwelling at the moment of regeneration (1 Corinthians 13:13; Romans 8:9), and filling (Ephesians 5:18) to empower for Christian life and service (Ephesians 3:3-6; Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:22-23).
5. MAN: his direct creation in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28), his subsequent fall into sin resulting in spiritual death (Genesis 3:1-24; Romans 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 (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6; 1 Peter 1:18-19).
7. THE CHURCH: one true church, the body and bride of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-32), composed of all true believers of the present age (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), and the organization of its members in the 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 (Ephesians 4:11-16).
8. CHRISTIAN LIFE: a life of righteousness, good works, and separation unto God from the evil ways of the world (Romans 12:1-2), manifested by speaking the truth (James 5:12), maintaining the sanctity of the home (Ephesians 5:22-6:4), settling differences between Christians in accordance with the Word of God (1 Corinthians 6:1-8), not engaging in carnal strife but showing a Christ-like attitude toward all men (Romans 12:17-21), exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and maintaining a life of prayer (Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 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 Christian should observe the ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, which are: (1) baptism of believers by Triune immersion and (2) the threefold Communion Service, consisting of the washing of the saints’ feet (John 13:1-17), the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 33, 34; Jude 12), and the communion of the bread and cup (1 Corinthians 11:23-36).
10. SATAN: his existence and personality as the great adversary of God and His people (Revelation 12:1-10), his judgment (John 12:31), and final doom (Revelation 20:10).
11. SECOND COMING: the personal, visible, and imminent return of Christ to remove His Church from the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), before the Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 1:10, Revelation 3:10), and afterward to descend with the church to establish His millennial kingdom upon the earth (Revelation 19:11-20:6).
12. FUTURE LIFE: the conscious existence of the dead (Philippians 1:21-23; Luke 16:19-31), the resurrection of the body (John 5:28-29), the judgment and reward of believers (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10), the judgment and condemnation of unbelievers (Revelation 20:11-15), the eternal

life of the saved (John 3:16), and the eternal punishment of the lost (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20: 15).

The “Statement of Faith” herein set forth cannot be changed or diminished.

ARTICLE IV. CHARTER

Section 1-Authority

1. The primary authority by which this church exists as an ecclesiastical body is received from the Holy Scriptures. But it recognizes and sustains the obligation of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Grace Brethren Churches.
2. The secondary authority is by the laws of the state of Pennsylvania, under which it is incorporated.

Section 2-Property

1. The title of the property of this church shall be vested in the congregation, which is referred to as the Penn Valley Church, A Grace Brethren Ministry.
2. In the event that this congregation shall ever be dissolved, the assets of said congregation shall not be distributed to any member or group of members, but shall be distributed to Grace Brethren North American Missions, Incorporated, P.O. Box 587, Winona Lake, Indiana 46590.

ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1-Qualifications

1. People who desire membership into the fellowship of Penn Valley Church must adhere to the following:
 - a. Confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and accept the Bible as complete, final, and the inspired revelation of the Triune God to Man.
 - b. Experienced Believer's Baptism as a testimony of their personal faith in Jesus Christ.
 - c. Attend the welcome class taught by the pastoral team.
 - d. Be interviewed by representatives from the Executive Committee of the Elders.
 - e. Consent to the covenants and provisions of this constitution, and the policies of the church.
 - f. Testify they are not members of a secret oathbound society.
 - g. Receive the right hand of fellowship at a public meeting of the church.

Section 2-Duties

Members are expected to be faithful in all spiritual duties essential to the Christian life, to participate in the Communion Service, to be loyal to the church, to attend regularly its services, to contribute to its support and charities and to share in its organized work.

Section 3-Privileges

1. All members who shall have fulfilled Article V., Section 2 of this constitution and who are fifteen years of age or over are eligible to vote in all business meetings of the church. Those who are not actively seeking to fulfill the duties of Article V., Section 2 have no vote.
2. Any member who feels dissatisfaction with the general procedure of any department of this church shall make known his/her case to the Pastor or the Executive Committee of the Elders.
3. The membership roll shall be open for inspection by any member.

Section 4-Withdrawal

1. A member's name may be dropped from the roll upon written request of the member involved.
2. Upon receiving evidence that a member has become a member of another church, that person's name shall automatically be dropped from the membership roll of Penn Valley Church.

Section 5-Dismissal

1. When members shall fail to perform their duties as outlined in Section 2 of this Article and shall fail to give evidence of vital interest in the church, after due efforts have been made by the Elders of the church to encourage their interest, and if this condition shall prevail for six months, their names shall be dropped from the roll.
2. Any member may be dismissed as a result of the church's discipline process.

Section 6-Reinstatement

Any member may be reinstated by fulfilling all of the qualifications under Article V. Membership, Section 1.

ARTICLE VI. GOVERNMENT

Section 1-Meetings

1. An annual business meeting shall be held as early as practical by the end of the first month of the church's fiscal year. It will be announced at least 30 days in advance of the date in which it is actually held and include the following items on the agenda:
 - a) Written reports submitted to the congregation by the Pastor, other staff members, and Executive Committee of the Elders reviewing the previous year.
 - b) Presentation and adoption of an annual budget, prepared by the Finance Elder in conjunction with and approval by the Executive Committee of the Elders.
 - c) The election and approval of those seeking eldership.
 - d) Approval of those serving as deacons for the year.
 - e) Any other items of business relevant and necessary, including an opportunity for the introduction of any items of business from the floor.
2. Special Business Meetings may be called in the following manner:
 - a) By the call of the Moderator, specifying the purpose(s) of the meeting.
 - b) Or by the written request of 10% of the total membership, specifying the purpose(s) of the meeting. Special Business Meetings shall be announced at least 14 days prior to the day held, including the statement of the purpose(s) of the meeting. No additional business may be addressed.
3. Congregational consideration of any matter may be requested by a 2/3 vote of those present at a meeting called for this purpose. A 4/5 majority shall be required to override a decision or action by the Executive Committee of the Elders.
4. A quorum of 10% of the membership shall be necessary at any business meeting in order for business to be conducted.
5. The majority of the members eligible to vote and present at any business meeting of this church may decide all questions of expediency and plans of work, except as may be otherwise provided in this Constitution.
6. Business meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.
7. Absentee ballots or voting in absentia will not be permitted.

Section 2-Officers and Committees

The officers and committees of this church shall be as follows:

1. Senior Pastor

- a. Call – When a vacancy shall occur in the position of Senior Pastor, one candidate at a time shall be considered and recommended to the congregation by the Executive Committee of the Elders. A two-thirds majority vote of those present at a business meeting duly called for this purpose shall be necessary for his call. Such a vote shall be taken by ballot. The term of the call shall be indefinite in length.
- b. Duties – In addition to the responsibilities common to all Elders of the church, he shall provide leadership, administration, and vision for the church and the Elders. He shall consider his primary responsibilities those of “feeding the flock” (1 Peter 5:2) and edifying the saints in accordance with Ephesians 4:11-16. He shall serve as Moderator of meetings of the Executive Committee of the Elders. He shall select and dismiss his pastoral and administrative staff with approval by Executive Committee of the Elders. He shall also be accountable to the Executive Committee of the Elders for the management of his staff.
- c. Vote of Confidence – A Special Business Meeting may be called by the Pastor, the Executive Committee of the Elders, or the congregation according to Article VI. Government, Section 1 to vote on the need for a Vote of Confidence. Should the need for a vote of confidence be passed by at least a 2/3-majority vote of those present and voting, a second meeting will be called for the Vote of Confidence with 14 days additional notice. Dismissal of the Pastor would then require a 2/3-majority vote of those present and voting at the business meeting.
- d. Termination – His leadership can be terminated voluntarily by the submitting of a written resignation to the Executive Committee of the Elders and to the congregation at any regular service or business meeting or by a vote of the congregation as indicated above. In either case a ninety-day period of time between resignation or recall and actual termination of duties/benefits shall be deemed appropriate unless mutually agreed upon otherwise by both parties.

2. Elders

- a. Composition – The Elders shall be composed of those men who meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and are duly elected by the congregation by 2/3 majority.
- b. Requirements
 1. The Executive Committee of the Elders shall present men to the congregation for their approval to the eldership when they have met the following criteria:
 - (a) Have been members of the church for enough time so that their conduct and character might be observed.
 - (b) Working toward completion of the required leadership training.
 - (c) Have demonstrated leadership capability in some other area of Penn Valley Church ministry.

c. Time of Service

Men who are elected to the eldership will have a lifetime call to serve in that position.

d. Organization

- (1) At its first meeting each year the Elders shall elect from among their membership an Executive Committee of no fewer than seven members who will be responsible for the everyday ruling and leadership of the flock.
- (2) Licensed and ordained Elders of the pastoral staff shall serve as non-voting ex officio members of the Executive Committee of the Elders.
- (3) The Executive Committee of the Elders shall elect a chairman of the Executive Committee of the Elders for a period of one year, who shall also serve as moderator of the congregation.
- (4) The Executive Committee of the Elders shall elect a vice-chairman of the Executive Committee of the Elders for one year who shall fulfill the role and duties of the chairman in the event of his absence.
- (5) The Executive Committee of the Elders shall elect a secretary for one year who shall be responsible to keep all records of the board and congregation.
- (6) The Executive Committee of the Elders shall structure itself in such a way as to conduct its business in an orderly and upright fashion.
- (7) No Elder, excluding pastors, may serve on the Executive Committee of the Elders for a period of more than five years consecutively. He must be off the Executive Committee of the Elders for at least one year before becoming eligible to be appointed by his fellow Elders to the Executive Committee of the Elders.
- (8) Elders not serving on the Executive Committee of the Elders may be assigned various responsibilities as needed. They will be expected to participate in the prayer and teaching ministry common to all elders.

e. Duties

- (1) The board shall not incur expense or authorize expenditure nor incur any indebtedness in an amount exceeding 2% of the approved fiscal year budget without congregational approval.
- (2) The board may request a vote of confidence or an expression of opinion of the congregation at any time.
- (3) A proposed budget for the year must be presented to the congregation for consideration and approval at the annual business meeting.

f. Removal

The process of removing any Elder from his position may be initiated by either:

- (1) A unanimous recommendation from the other elders on the Executive Committee of the Elders to the congregation.
- (2) A 2/3-majority vote of those present at a business meeting duly called for the purpose of seeking a removal vote.

Regardless of who initiates this process both the Executive Committee of the Elders and the congregation must agree by witness of the above. Should both of the groups agree then:

The Elder shall be officially removed from this position when a 4/5 majority of those present at a duly called meeting for the express purpose of taking a vote to remove him is received. Immorality and teaching contrary to the Statement of Faith will be considered grounds for immediate removal by the Executive Committee of the Elders.

g. Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy of a position on the Executive Committee of the Elders created by death, relocation, removal or resignation, the Elders shall appoint from among their number an Elder not currently serving on the Executive Committee of the Elders to serve as a replacement.

3. Deacons and Deaconesses

The purpose of Deacons and Deaconesses is to carry out the care and mercy needs of the flock under the direction of the pastors and elders. Areas of service will be dynamic, and based on the mercy needs of the flock at the time.

- a. Deacons & Deaconesses will serve as husband & wife teams to fulfill the needs of the flock.
- b. The Executive Committee of the Elders will present a list of candidates for Deacons & Deaconesses to the congregation. Deacons & Deaconesses will then be ratified by a 2/3-majority of the congregation at the annual business meeting.
- c. Qualifications are based on 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- d. The duration of service will be one year, with no limit on successive terms.
- e. Service may be terminated at any time due to disciplinary action.
- f. The Executive Committee of the Elders will appoint Deacons & Deaconesses to various needs.

4. Trustees

- a. Selection – A Board of Trustees shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Elders composed of those meeting the requirements of 1 Timothy 4:12. There shall be no limitation in years of service. The Board of Trustees shall organize itself under the direction of the Elder appointed to them for oversight.
- b. Duties – The Board of Trustees shall serve as custodians of all church property for the purpose of maintaining and protecting the physical properties of the church. They shall organize themselves according to existing needs and must have a working knowledge of the church policy manual and philosophy of ministry presented by church leadership; abiding by such in all decisions. Each trustee shall have an equal vote on any issues decided by the entire board. Each trustee will make recommendations on budget in his/her area of service, shall operate within the parameters of his/her approved budget, and will oversee his/her work as unto the Lord. Additionally, the entire Board of Trustees will make recommendations to the Executive Committee of the Elders in regard to the establishment of policy related to church property.
- c. Removal – A trustee may be removed by the Executive Committee of the Elders for just cause.
- d. Vacancies – In the event of a vacancy the Executive Committee of the Elders will approve a replacement to the Board of Trustees as per the established requirements listed herein.

5. Grace Christian School

Grace Christian School operates under the authority of the Executive Committee of the Elders of Penn Valley Church. At least one representative of the Executive Committee of the Elders shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Elders to serve on the Grace Christian School Board as a voting member. They will report to the Executive Committee of the Elders on all school matters and communicate the decisions of the School Board to the Executive Committee of the Elders for their information and when necessary their approval. The Grace Christian School Board shall establish its by-laws and constitution so as to reflect this portion of the church constitution. Otherwise, it shall be given freedom to organize itself and conduct its business in a manner consistent with the intent, purpose, and philosophy of the church. Additionally, the school Administrator will report to, and be accountable to the Senior Pastor or designated pastoral staff of the church in order to coordinate with the church philosophy and vision.

**ARTICLE VII.
MANUAL OF POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

A Manual of Policies and Procedures shall be established by the Executive Committee of the Elders providing oversight and direction to the ministry of the church. This manual shall be considered the official guiding document for any issues not specifically addressed by this constitution. It may be changed and altered by the Executive Committee of the Elders at any time. The Manual of Policies and Procedures shall be available for any member to inspect in the church office. Recommendations for changing the Policies and Procedures, which do not originate with the Executive Committee of the Elders, must be submitted to the elders in written form.

**ARTICLE VIII.
AMENDMENT OF THIS CONSTITUTION**

After the initial adopting of this constitution by a 2/3 majority vote by those present at a duly called business meeting for this purpose or a regular business meeting provided that this constitution shall be distributed in printed form and made available for consideration by members no less than two weeks before the meeting at which it will be considered and voted upon, the following conditions must be met for its amendment:

1. Any proposed amendment must be presented, in writing, to the Executive Committee of the Elders for its consideration and must be approved by the Committee before consideration by the congregation.
2. Any proposed amendment to be considered by the congregation must be distributed in printed form and made available for consideration by members no less than two weeks before the meeting at which it can be considered and voted upon.
3. No changes to the proposed amendment will be allowed at the business meeting. Any changes must be referred back to the Executive Committee of the Elders for consideration and approval, must be distributed in printed form and made available no less than two weeks before consideration of such changes to the proposed amendment by the congregation.
4. Any proposed amendment must be approved by a 2/3-majority vote of all those members present at a duly convened business meeting.