

## Membership Related Policies of Grace BFC

~ Adopted by the Elders of Grace BFC Wallingford on December 18, 2018 ~

### Coming Under Care of Grace BFC

**Under Care** – A person is considered to be “Under the Care of Grace BFC” when they have been assigned either an Elder, Host Team Member, or other Elder approved member of Grace that they are connected with for the purposes of personal and spiritual care, including walking with them as they connect to Grace. When a person is initially connected with someone to care for them, the office shall record the date and the person assigned to them. That “coming under care” date will be used for any waiting periods required for service in children’s ministry. ~ *from Child Protection Policy, Aug. 21 2018*

**Implementation Note:** *people typically come Under Care of Grace when a Host Team member follows up with a Sunday morning visitor who shows an interest in returning, when a small group or other ministry team leader determines that a person is becoming a regular part of their ministry, or when a Pastor or Elder believes a person has an interest in learning more about the church and how they might connect. In all cases, the leader who determines a person has an interest in connecting to Grace should contact the church office to provide basic contact information so the person can be listed in the church database as under care and can be appropriately followed up on*

### Becoming a Member of Grace BFC

**Membership** – Grace BFC, as a part of the Bible Fellowship Church, uses the definition and qualifications for membership as defined in the BFC in the book of Church Order (2016 edition):

202-3 Qualifications and Duties of Church Membership

202-3.1 Qualifications. Anyone desiring to be a member of the BFC shall give testimony and evidence of faith in Christ and the new birth. He shall be in sympathy with the Faith & Order, be baptized by immersion subsequent to salvation, and manifest holiness toward God and separation from the world (Acts 2:41-47).

202-3.2 Duties. Commitment to Christ and the BFC shall be manifested by the joyful acceptance of the following responsibilities:

- (1) To live in keeping with the doctrines and standards of the Church as found in the F&O (John 17:15-17; 1Cor.5:6-11; 6:14-18; Eph.5:26,27; Titus 3:10; James 1:26,27; 2Jo.9,10)
- (2) To exercise willingly one’s spiritual gifts within the body (Eph.4:11-16; 1Cor.12:4-31; Rom.12:3-8)
- (3) To minister under the direction of the Church (Acts 20:28; Heb.13:7; 1Pe.5:2,3; 1Tim.3:1; 5:17)
- (4) To bear the message of the Church to the outside world (Mat.28:19,20; Acts 1:8; Mat.5:13-16)
- (5) To pray daily for the elders and the ministries of the Church (Rom.10:1; Mat.9:38; Acts 4:29; Eph.6:18,19; Acts 13:2-4)
- (6) To support the program of the Church financially with the regular giving of tithes and offerings (Mal.3:10; 1Cor.9:13,14; 16:1,2; 2Cor.8:7-9; 9:6,7)

- (7) To submit to those God has ordained as rulers in the Church (Heb.13:17; cf. also references under #3 above)
- (8) To attend faithfully the stated meetings of the Church (Acts 2:42; Heb.10:25)
- (9) To observe the Lord's Supper (1Cor.11:23-28)
- (10) To demonstrate mutual care and concern for the other members of the Church (John 13:34,35; 15:12,17; Gal.6:1,2,10; James 5:9,16)

**Grace BFC Expectations Associated with Membership** – in 2013 the Elders produced a 3 page document on expectations of Members which is included as **Appendix A**

**Implementation Note:** *people typically attend a 6-8 session Membership and Baptism class led by the Senior Pastor prior to being Baptized or received as a Membership. In some cases, especially with the teenagers, these might be reduced to a shorter series of classes focusing on Baptism and leading to Baptism apart from membership. In special cases the classes may be replaced by meetings with one of the pastoral staff. In all cases those desiring to be baptized or to be received as members must be interviewed and approved by the Board of Elders.*

**Additional Motions of the Elders Related to Membership** (May, 15, 2018):

Resolved: That we change our baptism and membership screening process to include a quorum of elders during the screening.

Resolved: That we select a minimum of two elders to participate in any membership class offered in order to become acquainted with the potential applicants before we meet with them for membership screening.

Resolved: That we confer with parents or guardians and teen leaders when considering teens for baptism and/or membership.

## **Note on Baptism, Child Dedication, Weddings and Funerals at Grace BFC**

**Official Motions of the Board of Elders:** The following was approved by the Elders on January 17, 2017:

**Resolved** that the elders are required to officially approve and record in their minutes all those being added to or removed from membership, including the type of reception or termination, as well as all those being baptized, married or presenting their children for dedication within the ministry of Grace BFC.

**Record Keeping:** On January 17, 2017 the Elders enacted a list of requirements for Record Keeping that is attached here as **Appendix B**

**Weddings in the Church:** On August 22, 2015 the Elders approved the policy below entitled "FOR USE OF THE GRACE BFC (GBFC) OF WALLINGFORD CHURCH FACILITY FOR MARRIAGE"

The church facilities may only be used by a couple being married if at least one of them is a member of GBFC of Wallingford or he/she is the child of a member of GBFC of Wallingford. In all cases, both must be in agreement with the BFC Faith & Order and the Holy Scriptures. The pastor/officiant performing the ceremony must be a believer who is in agreement with Article 103-3 and Article 154 of the BFC Faith & Order..

All final decisions about the use of the church properties are the responsibility of the Elders.

## **Ending Membership at Grace BFC**

People may be removed from Membership any time at the request of the Member or of the Board of Elders. In all cases the Board of Elders shall approve of the change of Membership status. Where possible the Elders will communicate that change to the person and request an exit interview. A Member may be removed in the following ways:

1. Withdrawn – The Member may request in writing to any Elder that they be withdrawn from membership
2. Transferred – The Member may request in writing to any Elder that their membership be transferred to another Bible-believing Christian church
3. Deceased – Upon learning of the death of a Member the Elders shall remove them from membership effective on the date of their death
4. Dropped – When it is determined that a member is attending another Bible-believing Christian church, any Elder can reach out to them to see if they want to transfer or withdraw their membership, and if the Elder receives no response within 30 days, they can bring their name to the Elders to be dropped from Membership
5. Removed – If a Member is placed under discipline by the Elders they may reach a place where Biblically they should be removed from the Church, at such a time the Elders will remove the person from membership and mark that they were Removed Under Discipline

*Above adopted by the Elders on December 18, 2018*

## **Appendix A: Expectations associated with Membership**

**Membership carries the expectation that those who are members will make confession of faith in Jesus Christ and be like-minded in their understanding of God's word.**

- A member must confess that Jesus is Savior and Lord. "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (Romans 10:10) Belief is a matter of the heart and only the believer and God know what is in the heart. What is in the heart is known only to the believer and God. Yet God makes it clear that what is in the heart will be confessed from the mouth. Those who become members should formally and publicly profess their trust in what Christ has done, express their assurance of acceptance by God because of Him, and their submission to Him as lord.
- A member must be baptized. Baptism is not necessary for salvation but is a public identification with Christ. Baptism is a step of obedience and a profession of a person's desire to obey Christ and follow Him.
- A member must share the convictions of our church concerning what God desires for members. While doctrinal differences are a sad fact of church history and a reality among churches today, a shared doctrinal conviction draws us together in a common understanding of what God has done and is doing. We cannot be united as members of one body if we are divided on our understanding of the essentials of what God's word teaches. Members will be expected to be in sympathy with the doctrinal convictions expressed in the Articles of Faith of the Bible Fellowship Church.
- A member must accept the evangelistic task of our church, to confess Christ as Savior to our world, our nation and our community. We must be willing to be clear and firm in sharing the truth of the Gospel even when such proclamation may bring condemnation to us as individuals and as a church.

## **Membership is an attitude formed by commitment and submission.**

- The word of God makes it clear that the children of God are to live out the new life as a part of the family of God. We are "all members of one body" (Ephesians 4:25). We were all "baptized by one Spirit into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). We are not to "give up meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25).
- While we become members of God's universal church when we are born again through faith in Jesus Christ, God calls us to be committed and submitted to a local church which gathers for hearing God's word, enjoying fellowship, celebrating our Christ-won redemption, and praying together.
- The decision to belong to a local assembly of believers is made by individual believers or their family. The decision to join a part of God's family is a significant one and should be made prayerfully and deliberately. Any decision to break the bond of membership is a serious matter and should be considered only in consultation with the elders.
- The decision to be a member is expressed in commitment. Commitment is the desire to take one's place among the family of God which forms the assembly. Commitment accepts responsibility to participate in the ministry of the church and adopts the biblical vision of that church. Commitment shares the concerns of and for brothers and sisters in Christ who have themselves made the commitment to belong. Commitment makes God given spiritual gifts available for ministry. Commitment understands the significance of strong and healthy relationships between brothers and sisters in God's family.
- The decision to be a member is expressed in submission. Submission is recognizing and embracing the will of another. Membership is submission first to the will God and the teaching of His word. Membership is secondly submission to those whom God has appointed as leaders and spiritual care givers in the local church. Membership is also submission to other members whose needs and desires are given priority over the individual member's needs and desires.
- Those who become members understand that shared commitment and submission create a special bond between the followers of Jesus. That bond creates a family in which individual members know they are accepted and supported. That bond creates an understanding in which individual members know they have responsibility to others who are part of that family.

**Membership carries the expectation to glorify Jesus Christ with our lives. We are not perfect, nor will we ever become perfect until we meet Jesus Christ face to face. However, members should be ever maturing in Christ, surrendering more through growth in faith, and more clearly understanding the richness and fullness of God's abounding grace.**

- As God enables, members will worship the Lord with other believers by engaging in public worship and by observing the Lord's Supper.
- Members will pursue holiness by personally spending time with God. This includes reading the Bible to develop a deeper understanding of God's word; spending regular time in prayer, confessing our sin, seeking his wisdom, and asking for his direction in our lives, as well as the lives of others.
- As God enables, members will participate in the fellowship and the community of our local assembly of believers. Members will seek to discern their role within the local fellowship of believers, and step out in faith to be used by God as they invest their talents to the glory of God and the benefit of all.
- Members will model the importance of community to younger generations.
- Members will support the local fellowship of believers by actively praying. Members recognize that all they have comes from God, including the right to petition God through prayer for others
- Members will support the local fellowship of believers by systematic giving of their income. Members recognize that all they have comes from God, including the privilege to generously give back to God through tithing to the benefit of the local church, as well as the church universal. Members are encouraged to give above and beyond their tithe as God directs and blesses.

#### **Membership Blessings:**

**Those who become members enjoy the following benefits and blessings:**

- Members receive the spiritual care of elders.
- Members are supported through being held accountable.
- Members participate in decisions of the congregation.
- Members are part of a family network bound together by a publicly expressed commitment.

## Appendix B - Elders Motions Regarding Official Records – January 17, 2017

**Whereas** it is important for legal, denominational and historical reasons to keep and make accessible key records for the church, therefore be it

**Resolved** that the Church Office keep up to date, permanent, printed records of the following:

- All those joining in Membership at Grace BFC, including name, date, senior pastor and type of reception (new member or transfer member)
- All those ending their Membership at Grace BFC, including name, date, senior pastor and type of termination (withdrawn, transferred, deceased, dropped, removed\*)  
*\*note: terminology updated Dec. 5, 2018 to match policy on ending membership*
- All those baptized within the ministry of Grace BFC, including name, date, place of baptism, officiant
- All those being married within the ministry of Grace BFC, including name Bride and Groom, date, place of wedding, officiant
- All those dedicating children within the ministry of Grace BFC, including name of child being dedication, name of those dedicating the child, date, place of dedication, officiant
- All those who are members or attendees to Grace BFC that die, including name of deceased, Grace BFC membership status at the time of death (member, non-member), date of death, burial location, officiant
- Minutes from all officially called congregational meetings, including full text of any approved budgets and yearend financial reports
- Annual elders signature page of agreement with the Bible Fellowship Church Faith and Order

Be it further:

**Resolved** that the Church Office be instructed to keep digital records of all the above beginning in January 1, 2017, as well as keeping digital copies of all elder and deacon minutes and all official church policies. Be it further:

**Resolved** that the elders are required to officially approve and record in their minutes all those being added to or removed from membership, including the type of reception or termination, as well as all those being baptized, married or presenting their children for dedication within the ministry of Grace BFC. Be it further:

**Resolved** that for all areas where elder or congregational approval is needed that the Secretary of the Board of Elders shall be responsible to, and the only person authorized to, instruct the church office to update the records. Be it further:

**Resolved** that in all areas where the elders or congregation are not required to give approval that the Senior Pastor shall be responsible to, and the only person authorized to, instruct the church office to update the records. Be it further:

**Resolved** that the Secretary of the Board of Elders shall forward to the Church Office a digital copy of all approved Board of Elder minutes, final copies of approved Church Policies, ratified Board of Deacon minutes and approved Congregational Meeting Minutes (along with any approved Budgets, Year End Financial Reports or other congregationally approved documents). Be it further:

**Resolved** that all official printed records be kept in record books that are in an accessible place in the Church Office and that they be available for inspection at any time. Be if further:

**Resolved** that in addition to the permanent record book the Church Office maintain at all times an accurate record of current members that can be provided at any time.