



Abiding Grace Church of the South Hills Constitution & By-Laws

(Adopted on October 27, 2013)

Preamble

Article 1—Name

Article 2—Purpose

Article 3—Membership

Article 4—Meetings

Article 5—Officers

Article 6—Selection of Officers

Article 7—Requirements for Working with Children and Youth

Article 8—Indemnification

Article 9—Dispute Resolution

Article 10—Amendments

Article 11—Standing Elders

Preamble

Since it pleased Almighty God to call certain of His servants to unite under the name Abiding Grace Church of the South Hills (AGC; church) for the worship of God and the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and

Whereas we, the Elders of AGC, having searched the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have recognized the need to constitute ourselves to closely conform to His will for the Church in this age and prepare ourselves for great efforts in His name;

Now therefore we, the Elders of AGC, do hereby adopt this Constitution as our Articles of Governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible.

Article 1 - Name

The name of this Church is Abiding Grace Church of the South Hills, hereafter referred to as Abiding Grace Church (AGC) or simply, "church."

Article 2 - Purpose

This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities. This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

- Worshipping Him;
- Equipping the Saints through Bible instruction and study;
- Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching, personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture;
- Administering the Ordinances of Believer's' Baptism and the Lord's Supper;
- Encouraging fellowship among Believers of the Christian Faith;
- Serving other individuals, families, and other churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ; and
- Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work, local, domestic, and international.

Article 3 - Membership

Section 1 - Qualifications

To qualify for Membership in AGC, a person must be a Believer in Jesus Christ: who gives evidence of Regeneration by the Holy Spirit and Conversion through repentance from sin and a declared faith in the finished work of Christ for Salvation; who has been Baptized in obedience to Christ following his or her Regeneration; and who believes in the Christian Faith as revealed in the Bible. Each Member must agree to submit to the teaching of Holy Scripture and must sign the AGC Covenant and promise to keep the commitments expressed therein. The AGC Elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for Membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's Profession of Faith, a letter from the person's previous church, completion of the New Members' Class, or such other evidence as the Elders deem appropriate.

Section 2 - Admission of Members

To be admitted into AGC Membership, applicants shall be recommended by the Elders for admission and accepted unanimously by the standing Members at any regular or Special Meeting of the Members, and shall at that point relinquish their Membership in other churches.

Section 3 - Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties enumerated in the AGC Covenant, each Member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Only those shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church who are Members of AGC; non-Members may serve on an *ad hoc* basis with the approval of the AGC Elders. Notwithstanding, non-Members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation.

It is the privilege and responsibility of AGC Members to attend at least seventy-five percent of the yearly Members' Meetings and participate in the selection of Officers and decisions regarding Membership status and any other such matters as may be submitted for consideration.

In accordance with the Biblical mandate that all people give sacrificially and that they do not forsake the gathering together of Believers for the purpose of worship, giving, and fellowship, regular attendance at a majority of Sunday Worship Meetings is a prerequisite for participation in Members' meetings, unless a viable reason for one's absence from regular Sunday Worship Meetings be presented to and approved by the Elders of AGC. Examples of viable reasons for absence include, but are not limited to-being out of the State or Country, having a long-term illness, or being absent due to Missions work.

Section 4 - Associate Membership

Students and others temporarily residing in the Pittsburgh area who are Members of an Evangelical church may apply for Associate Membership at AGC. Qualifications for temporary Associate Membership are identical to those of full Membership as set out above, except that home-church Membership must be retained. A Letter of Commendation will be sought from the applicant's home-church, having been constructed and/or approved by a recognized Vocational Pastor or Elder of that said home-church.

Duties and privileges of Associate Members are the same as that of other Members except that:

1. When absent from the Pittsburgh area for extended periods of time, Associate Members are released from the responsibility of attending AGC Worship Meetings;
2. While they will be encouraged to attend Members' Meetings, Associate Members will not be eligible to stand for any Office or to participate in AGC's congregational decisions.

Termination of Associate Membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for other Members, except that the AGC Elders shall notify the Pastor or Elders of the Member's home-church of that termination. Associate Membership will normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the Pittsburgh area.

Section 5 - On Church Discipline

Any AGC Member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of AGC, shall be subject to the admonition of the Elders and the discipline of the church according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of Scripture. Church discipline, then, should only be contemplated after individual, private admonition has failed.

The purpose of such discipline should be for: the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined; the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them; the purity of the church as a whole; the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians; and supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character.

Section 6 - Termination of Membership

Termination of Membership shall be recognized by the church following the death or voluntary resignation of any AGC Member. Membership may be terminated as an act of church discipline at the written recommendation of the Elders and with the majority agreement of the Members at any regular or Special Meeting of the Members.

Article 4 - Meetings

Section 1 - Worship Meetings

Worship Services and other corporate gatherings shall be held each Lord's Day and may also be held throughout the week as the Elders determine.

Section 2 - Members' Meetings

In every meeting together, Members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There shall be a regular Members' Meeting at least every six months, at some time apart from a public worship Service as determined by the Elders.

An Elder shall preside as Moderator at all Members' Meetings of the Church. The Elders shall see that the stated meetings of the Church are regularly held and that required Reports are submitted to the Church by the responsible Members.

Providing all Constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a viable quorum shall be determined and met by those Members present.

There shall be an Annual Members' Meeting at which Officers are affirmed, Positions are filled, and a Budget is approved by the Membership, no less than one month prior to the start of the fiscal year. The AGC fiscal year shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31.

Special Members' Meetings may be called as required by the Elders, or at a written request, submitted to the Elders, by twenty percent of the voting Membership. The date, time, and purpose of any Special Meeting shall be announced at all public Meetings of the church within two weeks preceding the Meeting. In the event of a written request from the Members, the Elders shall call a Special Meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

Article 5 - Officers

Section 1 - Summary

The Biblical Offices in the church are Elders and Deacons. In addition, AGC recognizes the administrative Positions under this Constitution of Secretary and Treasurer. All Officers must be Members of AGC prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2 - Elders

The Elders shall comprise not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the Office of Elder set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. A majority of the active Eldership shall be composed of AGC Members not in the regular pay of the Church, and no Elder shall hold the Office of Deacon during his tenure.

The Elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Peter 5:1-4, the Elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine in keeping with the church's Statement of Faith), and of shepherding God's flock.

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling in accordance with the Constitutional provisions on the Selection of Officers. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His Church and set apart as Elders.

An Elder's tenure in Office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two Members with reason to believe that an Elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the Elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21. Any Elder may be dismissed by the unanimous agreement of the other Elders at any time, and any Elder or group of Elders may be dismissed by the unanimous agreement of the Members (excluding Elders) at any Members' Meeting of the church.

The Elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective and standing Members, by examining and recommending all prospective candidates for Offices and Positions, by overseeing the work of the Deacons, and by appointing church agents (liaisons) and Committees, as well as conducting Worship Services, administering the Ordinances of Baptism and Communion, and by equipping the Membership for the work of the Ministry, vis-a-vis the encouraging of sound doctrine and practice, in keeping with AGC's Statement of Faith and its Church Covenant, and also by admonishing and correcting error, overseeing the process of church discipline, coordinating and promoting the ministries of the church, and by mobilizing the church for missions. An Elder shall preach each Lord's Day (allowing for guest speakers as appropriate). The Elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share AGC's fundamental convictions.

The Elders may establish Ministry Positions or Committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The Elders may also propose paid Staff Positions, and as such, shall present a Job Description for each Position to the Church Membership for discussion. The Membership may suggest candidates to fill such Positions to the Elders, Deacons, or other Staff Members. The Elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of all AGC Staff Members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to the Deacons or other Staff Members as seen fit or determined by the Elders.

Section 3 - The Pastor-Preaching Elder (Vocational Pastor)

The full-time Vocational Pastor shall be an Elder. He shall perform the duties of an Elder described in Section 2 (*above*), but shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time Ministry of preaching and teaching.

Section 4 - Deacons

The Office of Deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. AGC shall recognize, in accordance with the Constitutional provisions on the Selection of Officers, male AGC Members who are giving of themselves in service to the church, who possess gifts of leadership, and who are called to further service. These Members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His Church and set apart as Deacons.

A Deacon's tenure in Office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any Deacon may be dismissed by the unanimous agreement of the Elders at any time.

Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of Members, attend to the accommodations for Worship Meetings, oversee the properties of the church, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration.

The Deacons, with the agreement of the Elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or Committees of Members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

Resolutions adopted by the Deacons shall be reported first to the Elders and thereafter to the church at Members' Meetings. All such resolutions may be reversed by resolution of the Elders.

Section 5 - Secretary

It shall be the duty of the Secretary to record the Minutes of all regular and Special Members' Meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate Roll of the Membership, and to render reports as requested by the Elders, the Deacons, and/or the Members.

In the absence or incapacity of the Secretary, the Elders shall appoint another Member to perform the duties of the Secretary.

The Secretary shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this Constitution be available to all Members upon request.

Section 6 - Treasurer

The Treasurer shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories, as the Elders shall approve. The Treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any Officer, employee, or agent of the church. The Treasurer shall render to the Elders annually, or upon request, an account of all transactions as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.

Each year the Treasurer, with input from the Deacons and approval from the Elders, shall present to the church an itemized budget at a Members' Meeting at least one month prior to the Annual Members' Meeting. This budget shall be presented for discussion at that time and called up for approval by majority congregational vote at the Annual Members' Meeting.

Spending in any major budget category may not exceed the budgeted amount by more than five percent without explicit approval from the Members in a Members' Meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its Ministries without the approval of the Elders and Deacons.

The Treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting the Elders with monthly reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the Church (financial reports), and will make quarterly and annual financial reports available to the Members upon request. The Treasurer shall receive, hold, and oversee the disbursement of a fund for benevolence and thereby report on its use to the Elders at the Elders' request, and report to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.

Article 6 - Selection of Officers

Section 1 - Principles

The process for the Selection of Officers shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

- Substantial prayer, both individual and corporate, should be an integral part of the selection process;
- Nominations should proceed with the support of the Elders;
- All nominees for church Office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow Members;
- The selection process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2 - Procedure

The Selection of Officers shall be held at the annual Members' Meeting of the church. A slate of names of nominees to serve as Elders, Deacons, Secretary, and Treasurer shall be presented by the Elders at a Members' Meeting at least one month in advance, and the selection shall proceed as directed by the Moderator.

The Elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the AGC Membership in the nomination process. Any Member with reason to believe that a nominee is unqualified for an Office should express such concern in writing to the Elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a nominee should express their objection in writing to the Elders at least one week before the relevant church Members' Meeting.

The moderating Elder shall declare appointed persons receiving the affirmation of the Members present.

The persons selected shall assume their respective Offices at the beginning of the fiscal year (unless another date has been specifically designated). Any vacancies that may occur during the course of the year may be filled at any Members' Meeting upon recommendation of the Elders.

Section 3 - Calling of the Pastor-Preaching Elder (Vocational Pastor)

In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an Elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential Vocational Pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the existing Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and

Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to Membership and called as Vocational Pastor must be given at two consecutive Sunday morning Worship Services following the nomination, prior to the Elders' approval and presentation at a Members' Meeting.

Article 7 - Requirements for Working with Children and Youth

Section 1 - Two-Adult Minimum Requirement

While engaged in any activity with children or youth including, but not limited to: Sunday School, Children's Church, nursery service, youth group, field trips of any kind, transporting a child or youth to/from a church-related event, or escorting a child to the restroom, no adult AGC Member should be in the presence one child alone; that is, an adult AGC Member acting as a teacher, leader, or chaperone should not be alone with only one child, but a lone child should always be in the presence of at least two adults simultaneously.

Section 2 - Required Background Checks for Child and Youth Workers

All AGC Members who regularly act as volunteers working with children or youth are required to have the following background checks completed:

- Police background check/investigation
- Act 32/33 investigation

All completed background check paperwork for AGC Members should be kept on file by the Secretary.

Article 8 - Indemnification

Section 1 - Mandatory Indemnification

If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an Officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the Elders determine that the person acted: (a) in good faith; (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances; and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

Section 2 - Permissive Indemnification

At the discretion of the Elders, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

Section 3 - Procedure

If a quorum of the Elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of Elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the Membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the Membership.

Article 9 - Dispute Resolution

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church, AGC shall require its Members to resolve conflict among themselves according to Biblically based principles without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of Biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan, and whether individuals or corporate entities. The Elders shall adopt policies and procedures to effect these requirements and aspirations.

Article 10 - Amendments

Amendments to the Statement of Faith, Church Covenant, and this Constitution may be made by the Elders provided the Amendment shall have been offered in writing at a previous Members' Meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at Worship Meetings two successive Sundays prior to the Members' Meeting.

The revised version of any Amended Document shall be made available to all Church Members by the Secretary upon request.

Article 11 - Standing Elders

The following individuals are Elders of Abiding Grace Church of the South Hills and as such, have access to any and all business documents and transactions pertaining to Abiding Grace Church of the South Hills. Furthermore, they can legally represent Abiding Grace Church of the South Hills in any other miscellaneous business affairs deemed legitimate by a voting majority of the Elders prior to those said-affairs.

Stephen Vinay
Scott Moore
Rudolph Hanechak
Wayne Heckman
Michael Milano