

*A Position Letter from the Elders at Grace Community Church
Regarding Church Distinctives*

Grace Community Church is a church that desires to lead believers to glorify God in all things. We are a church that is intentionally simple, and we try to focus most on the things that are most important: preaching and teaching Scripture, celebrating the ordinances/sacraments together, and discipling others to follow Christ. To that end, there are a few things that make Grace unique:

Reformed Theology

At its heart, Reformed theology confesses that God first makes us come to life (regeneration) in order that we may then follow Him in faith—He is the author and finisher of our faith. We spell out some of the specifics of our faith through five *solas* (*sola* meaning ‘only’) of our faith that are part of our Reformational heritage. These statements make specific claims about the gospel—specifically, claiming that the gospel is to the glory of God, and God alone (only).

Sola Gratia

By grace alone—we are saved by God’s unconditional and undeserved grace *alone*.

Sola Fide

Through faith alone—we are justified not by our works but by God’s grace working through faith *alone*.

Solus Christus

In Christ alone—the Person and work of Jesus Christ alone is our source of salvation and justification, and our salvation is to His praise and glory *alone*.

Sola Scriptura

By the authority of Scripture alone—Scripture *alone* is the inerrant, sufficient, and final authority for the church.

Soli Deo Gloria

To the glory of God alone—every aspect of our salvation, from start to finish, redounds to the eternal glory of God *alone*.

Credobaptism

At Grace, we practice credobaptism, demonstrating the conviction that baptism is the public profession of the saving work of Holy Spirit. God alone calls, regenerates, and saves, and baptism is an ordinance or sacrament observed by the church. We also acknowledge that some of our members may have the conviction of baptizing the children of believing parents as a sign of covenant (paedobaptism). To these we extend full fellowship and standing as covenant members of our church, not dividing the body regarding the mode and timing of baptism, while understanding that any valid baptism is

to be performed in a Christian church of like faith and practice (those proclaiming salvation by grace through faith). We also acknowledge these matters to be matters of the conscience, and therefore encourage unity in our one faith and one baptism.

Plural-Elder Leadership

We are not a denominationally-affiliated church, so in that regard we are independent in our church governance. Within our church, we are governed by a group of elders who guide the church spiritually—a representative government, rather than democratic (congregational) or autocratic leadership. Following biblical standards, our elders are men who meet the biblical requirements for the spiritual oversight of the church body. Our elders are co-equal as overseers in the ministry, while one elder is set aside as an ‘elder-pastor’ to oversee the main responsibilities of teaching and preaching. Our church is also served by deacons, who devote themselves to administrative and physical needs of the church under the leadership of the elders.

Expository Preaching

One distinctive feature about Grace is our commitment to expository/expositional preaching. Expository preaching is allowing the text to speak for itself—working carefully and systematically through Scripture, explaining the meaning of the text, and making application to our lives. We value and need God’s Word, and we believe expository preaching to be the best way to feed our people a robust, regular diet of Scripture.

Family Ministry

We worship together at Grace as a church family, and we are a church family that is made up of many smaller individual families. We want to encourage multi-generational worship together as much as we are able, while also working to equip our individual families to continue discipleship in their homes throughout the week. Our church provides nursery service and our children's ministry (Graceland) for children up through 4th grade on Sunday mornings, yet we are also welcoming of children of any age in the main worship service (as each family's conscience leads). In all these efforts, we encourage our church family to worship and serve together as much as possible.

Covenant Membership

Membership at Grace involves covenanting with fellow believers to grow in discipleship together, to exhort and admonish one another in faith and godliness, and to serve alongside one another in ministry. We do not maintain a membership roll, but we ask that our members work through our membership class and covenant together with our church while submitting to its leadership. Covenant membership allows us to grow in discipleship, exercise healthy church discipline, and fully partake in the life of the church. We also affirm that the children of Christian families are part of our church body—this means that the church must extend its care, love, discipline, and training to the children of Christian homes, all with a watchful expectation that they respond with faith in Christ and thereby personally receive all the benefits of the covenant.

Christocentric Worship

Worship is both a celebration of what God has done for us, an inspiration to those who participate, and instruction through the songs we sing and truths we confess. Our worship places an emphasis on congregational worship—we want to encourage our church to sing together as an act of worship to the Lord.

Missional Focus

We believe that the Christian life is one that shares our faith with those around us. To that end, we want to be involved in mission efforts both domestic and abroad, and we want to be actively involved in reaching the community around us.

Signed,

the Elders of Grace Community Church
Battle Creek, MI
Soli Deo Gloria