

Membership Class Two

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 March 2021

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Good morning, you all. As I said earlier this morning, it's a beautiful day today in Honolulu. Use your imagination.

A few thousand miles removed. Appreciate your presence this morning. We've got a kind of special content for this morning that we are considering.

And I'll explain it to you right after we have a word of prayer. We're grateful, Father, for the rain we're receiving and for the good that we know it will do. And it, as well as the sunshine, all bear testimony to your faithfulness and your loving provision for us.

We especially are grateful for this day being Mother's Day, a time when we can acknowledge and honor our mothers in a special way. Indeed, we are so deeply grateful for each and every one.

Thank you for the truth that you've prepared for us and for those who are here to receive it. We pray for open minds and hearts that we may be eager to hear and eager to obey whatever you reveal.

[1 : 04] In Christ's name, amen. Amen. This is a kind of unusual session that we are having because ordinarily when we receive new folks into membership, we designate two or three classes for them to attend so we can explain what all is involved in membership at Grace Bible Church.

But as I mentioned in our last session together, because we have been here now for 50 years, it would probably be a good idea after all that time to review what is involved in being a member of Grace Bible Church.

And the first thing you need to know is there are all kinds of churches with all kinds of memberships and all kinds of doctrine and practices and things that they consider important and unimportant and so on.

And there is no greater difficulty, perhaps, that we face than getting into the scriptures and trying to decide exactly what kind of a church God wants us to be.

Okay. So we have done that and we arrived at a number of positions, a number of conclusions, many of which we shared in our last session together, that is why we believe what we believe and what is set forth for a church to adopt as its doctrine.

[2 : 30] Today we are going to consider and ask for your input for anything, any questions that you may have. Now, the application or the instrumentation of that doctrine, and that resides in what is known as the bylaws.

All right. So here's your doctrine. This is what the church believes, and we covered that last week. Now, in light of that, how do you carry that out? How is a church to be organized so as to function and fulfill what you say is important and that you believe?

And that is found in what we've referred to as our bylaws. Now, first of all, I want to begin with an apology because there is a fresh batch of these all made up for your consideration, and they were to be distributed to you this morning so you would have a copy in front of you.

The problem is I forgot them and left them home. So I'll have them next week, and you'll be able to refer to them. Meanwhile, before we even get into the bylaws, it would perhaps be more appropriate to follow up on an offer I made you last week, and that is when you were given this copy that each of you did receive last week of our Constitution, which sets forth our statement of faith, doctrine, what we believe, et cetera, I ask you to take it home, and even after we had gone over it here, if you have any questions, comments, suggestions that you'd like to raise, feel free to do so, and we'll do our best to consider them.

So, perhaps before we get underway with the bylaws, we ought to ask, as a result of what you heard last week and what you were able to read in this little booklet, does anybody have any questions or suggestions regarding our Constitution or statement of faith?

[4 : 20] Feel free if you do. Questions of curiosity, doctrine, whatever, you're more than welcome. Okay, thank you then.

With that in mind, I want to begin with our reference to the bylaws here, and perhaps it would be appropriate to offer some special apologies to the young people who are here this morning, because I imagine this is just going to be as exciting as all get out.

And, but this is the best we adults can do, so you'll just have to bear with us, okay? Sometimes, sometimes you kids just have to put up with adults, you know?

And, and, and, and by the way, putting up with adults is important to your growth and maturity, because if you put up with them and learn how to do that, the day will come when you will be one, and you will be asking those kids to put up with you then, okay?

So, this was originally adopted in 1971, and it was revised in 1989, and we'll explain about the revision a little later on.

[5 : 34] The government of this church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is vested in its members, here and after referred to as members.

In other words, that means that the authority for decisions that are made of any consequence here at Grace Bible Church are made by the congregation.

Some think that, and I happen to agree with them, and at least in some points, that this is as it ought to be, because after all, these are the people who pay for everything that happens here.

For the building of the building, the maintenance of it, and everything else that is involved. So, everybody who is a member has a say. And everybody who is a member has a vote.

And when we conduct our business meetings, as we'll talk later on, which we usually have just once a year, unless we have a special meeting, then those who are members come together, and issues are brought to the floor, and things need to be decided, and we ask everybody to take a position one way or another, and we vote.

[6 : 41] And whatever the majority rules, that's the way it goes. It's called a congregational government. In a way, it's kind of like our national government, where everybody goes to the polls when it comes time to elect a president or vote on taxes or something like that, because it does seem only reasonable that the people who have to foot the bills ought to have some expression or some input as to how the money they provide is utilized.

And that's the main reason that we have arrived at a congregational-type government. And then, item B, which you do not have in front of you, but you will have next week.

The authority of the pastors, elders, officers, and committees of this church is derived from its constitution and bylaws, or by resolution of the members at a duly called business meeting.

Any authority not so granted is specifically reserved in the members. And here is what is involved in membership. First, a member is one who has confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

And what this requires is that somebody who is applying for membership is required to give what we call a testimony, or an expression, or an explanation, of their relationship to God through Jesus Christ.

[8 : 09] And if you have trusted Christ as your Savior, He has come into your life, and He has changed you and made you a new creature in Christ, you are a member of the body of Christ, even though you may not be a member of any church.

You are a member of the body of Christ. That means you belong to God. Because you have received God's Son, whom He sent to this earth to die for our sins.

And if you have received Christ as your Savior and your substitute for sin, then you are automatically a member of the body of Christ, and you are then eligible to become a member of Grace Bible Church.

And secondly, someone who agrees to be governed in matters of church membership by its constitution and by laws and discipline practices. And that simply means if somebody wants to become a member of Grace Bible Church, we give them a copy of our statement of faith and a copy of our by laws, and we tell them that it is essential for the sake of unity that you agree with what is in here in order to become a member.

And if you read it over and look at it and say, well, I don't believe any of that stuff, and I don't buy that, but I still want to become a member, we'd have to say, we're sorry, but you're not eligible. Because the bylaws make it very clear that you need to be in agreement with those bylaws and constitution that are written.

[9 : 40] And if you're not in agreement with them, you would not fit in here. It would not be a good mix. So you may want to look someplace else for another church that does have something that you can agree with, because this would not be it.

And secondly, or third, accepts in its entirety a statement of faith, that is, believe the same thing, and that we covered last week, and has completed the necessary periods of instruction preparatory for membership as deemed suitable by the pastor, which shall include, but not be limited to, review and explanation of church constitution and bylaws.

That's what we're doing right now. Ordinarily, we don't do this. Ordinarily, we have a Bible class for this particular 9 o'clock hour, and when we have a membership information class, which is what you're getting now, it is usually held just with myself and those who are applying for membership, and that may involve two or three people, or it may involve a dozen, but then we meet in my office, and it's more specific for them rather than what we're doing now.

But the reason we're doing it now is because we've been here for 50 years, and those who have been members, some of them, all 50 years from the time we started, we thought after all this length of time, it'd be a good idea if we kind of refreshed what we're all about.

In fact, in retrospect, we probably shouldn't have waited 50 years to do it, because the items are important enough to cover, so that's what we're doing now.

[11 : 20] And then, after one has undergone this material, which, by the way, is required for those of you here who will be applying for membership, but is just a review for those who are already members, then those who are going to apply for membership will meet with the Board of Elders, myself, and the elders' wives, and this is one of our highlights of the year.

It's a very relaxed, informal kind of occasion. It's always a time of great enjoyment where those who are applying for membership are introduced to the elders, and you usually already know them because they've been coming for some time, and then the individuals are asked to give a little capsule of their coming to faith in Christ when they became a believer or what the circumstances were or how they know and understand themselves to be a member of the body of Christ and thus eligible to apply for membership here.

So that is item number five, being considered is recommended by the Board of Elders. And then the Board of Elders does not make the decision as to who is going to be members.

The Board of Elders then simply makes a recommendation to the congregation that so-and-so and so-and-so be received into membership at Grace Bible Church.

And then the whole congregation votes on that. So that makes it a large family affair, and that's one of the reasons we do it that way. And continuing right on, the receiving of members and the voting of members, voting shall be limited to those members who are 18 years of age or older.

[13 : 15] Special membership, requests for special membership, which excludes voting and office holding while permitting temporary service in other capacities, will be given due consideration by the Board of Elders.

Sometimes we have people who want to become a member, but for some reason, they are perhaps possessing a membership in another church somewhere, and they may be in the area just attending school or attending college or something.

But they want to be a member of Grace, or at least a provisional kind of member, and those we take into consideration as well. Perhaps the most unusual, one of the most unusual things about Grace Bible Church is that when someone becomes a member, their membership expires at the end of the year.

December 31, all memberships expire. So during the month of November and December, those who are members have an opportunity to, well, in the Army we used to call this re-up.

You have an opportunity to re-enlist, as it were. And then there is no class to attend. There's no one particular to meet with. You're just given a form, and all you need to do is sign the form indicating that you wish to be a member of Grace Bible Church.

[14 : 45] You want your membership to continue for another year. At the end of the year, it expires again. Why do that? Well, we do that mainly for one particular reason, and that is most of us have come from churches in the background where there are people on the membership rolls who have passed on, and they're still on the roll.

You can't even get off of some rolls when you die. And then there are some who have moved away and are no longer in the area, and yet their name is still on the roll. So it's kind of misleading, and someone can say, you attend such and such a church?

Yes, right. What's the membership of the church? Oh, it's about 700. Really? You have that many people? Well, we don't have that many people on Sunday. We have about 150.

But there are 700 who are members, and that means kind of like voting rolls. You know, they need to be cleaned every once in a while, and sometimes names need to be removed.

So this guarantees us that we will not only have an actual living membership, but we will have people who continue to remain in step with the congregation so that they want to reaffirm their desire to be a member.

[16 : 01] And if I had it to do over again, as I confessed earlier, I would have suggested instead of every year, maybe every two years, because a year rolls around really fast.

But that's neither here nor there. And however, that's something that the membership could change at a business meeting if they wanted to. Membership maintenance is required by a reaffirmation each year.

And members may be removed from the church role through any one of the following. Number one, by written request. If it is determined that the request is an attempt to avoid possible disciplinary action, the request may be tabled indefinitely pending investigation.

Otherwise, the request will be approved without delay by the Board of Elders. And the disciplinary action thing is a real rare situation that in our 50 years, we only had one need to implement that, and that's what resulted in a change that we have just shared with you regarding the dismissal of members.

So, in our 50 years of history, we have never been forced to kick anybody out. Let me put it that way. But there are provisions made because sometimes people in their behavior can go astray and bring reproach upon the name of the church through their activities, and there needs to be a basis for dealing with that, and there is one.

[17 : 32] Or, their membership can be discontinued by failure either to reaffirm the desire to become membership if they just don't sign up again, or by a request for a letter of recommendation from another church of like faith and order.

Somebody moves to Cleveland, and they apply for a membership up there, and we may get a letter from that church saying, so and so, John Smith has applied for membership here, and we want you to be advised so that you can adjust your roles accordingly, then we remove them from our roles because they're someplace else.

And then, through disciplinary action of the church, we have never had to do that in 50 years, but the provision is there. The business meetings, all business meetings of the members shall be held at the principal place of worship of this church, which is here, unless otherwise specified in the meeting.

And the time of the annual meeting, there shall be an annual meeting of the members during December each year, and the congregation voted to change that, so this is a little bit out of date because it was changed to, I believe, November, rather than be that close to the end of the year.

And the exact date is to be determined by the Board of Elders. Public announcement of the date shall be given on or at least two successive Sundays prior to the meeting, and the fiscal year shall end on December 31.

[18 : 56] That, too, is something that would be changed. Special business meetings may be called by the pastor, the elders, or by written request of 10% of the members who are eligible to vote.

So that leaves the congregation with options. Should any kind of situation arise where there needs to be something important has come up and there needs to be a business meeting, not an annual meeting, but one held as soon as possible, the pastor may call for a church business meeting, or the elders may call for a church business meeting, and if such is done, all special business meetings and the purpose thereof must be announced at two regular services prior to the meeting.

And these are all safeguards that are built into the thing to afford maximum protection for the congregation. And for the calling of a pastor, section 4, IA2 of these bylaws shall apply, and we'll come to that later.

For the conduct and quorum of business, most organizations require 10% of the membership in order to have a quorum and be able to conduct a business meeting.

And that means, that means if you have 100 members, only 10 members need to be present to conduct a business meeting.

[20 : 40] And then, if it is a majority vote issue, of those 10, only 6 votes are required to effect a change or adopt a resolution.

So, you've got 100 people who are members, but 6 people are making the decision for all 100. And we never thought that very equitable to begin with.

So, from our very origin, from our first business meeting, it was established that we would not be satisfied with 10%.

We require 25%. 25% of those who are voting members are required to be present or you cannot conduct a business meeting.

That's the minimum number that you need. And in our 50 years and all of the business meetings that we've held, we have never lacked a quorum because people consider it an important thing and important issues and they come out and they voice their opinions and they vote.

[21 : 44] So, the agenda of all business meetings includes an opening and closing prayer, proof of notice of meeting and quorum, reading of pertinent minutes and transaction of old and new business.

We try as best we can to be really open and up front with the congregation. We do not have a hidden agenda, a bunch of secrets going on, which only a few people are in on.

Our pledge and our desire is to be as open and as above board as possible and the only possible exception to that would be if I, as a pastor or the board of elders, becomes aware of a situation that requires confidentiality in order to protect somebody's privacy.

We respect that and that has, I don't know that that has ever been a problem or ever been an issue, but it is a safeguard because sometimes events occur and some things may happen in the lives of a family or members of the church and to protect their privacy because there may be some embarrassing features involved and we want to respect that and that's never been an issue but it is a safeguard, another safeguard that is built into it.

And at all business meetings the moderator of the church shall preside in his absence. A moderator shall be appointed by the elders in an ad hoc capacity.

[23 : 15] Current edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern all procedure of business not specified by these bylaws. And voting, the method of voting shall be determined by the moderator with due consideration of any member's request except for the election or removal of officers, discipline of members, the expenditure of funds exceeding an average weekly offering based on the previous fiscal year and the sale of transfer of real or personal property.

In these instances voting shall be by secret ballot. Any questions thus far? Gary? Mark, do you have any idea how many members we have?

I think last November on the report we had 91. Okay. Chris says 91. Now as you look at the directory that is issued every year and there's one out there for 2021, the only way to distinguish the members from the non-members is that those who are members have their names in capital letters and those who are not are in just a regular letter so you can distinguish one from the other.

but very often I frankly sometimes I don't remember I don't know who is a member and who is not and in a way I think that's a good thing except when it comes time to vote and one reason I like that is because I don't have to deal with any kind of favoritism oh so and so is a member I better be thus and so to them and here's somebody who is not a member we labor to treat everybody the same so that everybody feels the same and everybody is welcome and everybody is respected and it doesn't make any difference whether you're a member or not and last week I explained why we even have a membership and we do because we own property and because we own property you have to have a deed and if you have a deed you've got to have somebody's name on the deed and the name on our deed is Grace Bible Church I don't own the church I'm just a pastor the congregation who is Grace Bible Church you own the building and the grounds that's who

Grace Bible Church is it's the membership so if if Grace Bible Church is on the deed then the question comes up well who is Grace Bible Church well Grace Bible Church is those who have conducted themselves in a way to become eligible and they apply for membership and they are accepted into membership then they become Grace Bible Church they're the ones who decide and the time should ever come when this property is to be sold or you are to call a new pastor that's a congregational decision and the information is put to the congregation and then the congregation each person has a vote and you vote on whatever the issue may be so that brings up the issue of church officers here and the officers shall be a pastor moderator treasurer financial secretary Sunday Bible School superintendent assistant or church clerk any other elected offices are authorized as the need arises the pastor the pastor is to exercise diligence in the authoritative teaching and preaching of the word of God and to this end devote himself to a life of prayer and study he shall have the oversight of the church be responsible for its spiritual growth he shall preside at worship services administer the Lord's supper as he sees fit he shall be an ex officio member of each board or committee he shall be authorized to sign checks in the absence of financial officers and then the voting for a pastor is given and I'm not going to bore you with reading that you'll get a copy next week anybody that has any questions can do so

[27:17] I would just say this that a candidate for pastor shall be considered only after he is subscribed in writing to the constitution of bylaws then be recommended to the members by at least a three-fourths affirmative vote of the total number of elders and a three-fourths affirmative vote of the elders present at a duly called business meeting for the specific purpose of voting on a candidate shall constitute a call notice of said meeting shall have been given on at least two successive Sundays prior to the vote the pastor's ministry may be terminated by submitting of his resignation to the church in writing such termination shall not become effective less than 30 days from the date of official notification and a pastor may be recommended for dismissal by a two-thirds vote of the total members of elders at least 30 days prior to such vote being taken pastors shall be notified in writing of the reasons for the intended consideration and action a subsequent three-fourths vote of the total number of elders shall suspend the pastor from all past duties pending final action of the church it's a shame that this even has to be covered but we all know that pastors are human beings and it would be wrong to put a pastor on a pedestal and say he is not capable of any kind of wrongdoing that reminds me my first wife

Barbara to whom I was married almost 50 years before she passed was at a local beauty shop having her hair done and just struck up a conversation with the gal who was doing her hair and she said so what does your husband do and Barb says he's the pastor of a church and she said really a reverend and Barb said well yeah I guess you would call him that and she said I just can't imagine I just can't imagine what that would be like and she said what do you mean and she said well to be to be actually married to somebody who is so so so holy I don't know what that would be like and Barb said neither do I the guy she got was completely human and I say that to simply say that as people in a congregation succumbing to some kind of temptation can do something that is dishonoring to the Lord or brings reproach upon the church so can a pastor you do not see a halo over my head and that means

I am made of the same stuff as everybody else in this congregation I may have a different calling but I don't have a different potential or a different capacity than you do pastors are very human flawed sometimes failing human beings so welcome to the human race and if you think that a pastor is some special super godly person who is always doing the right thing always thinking the right thing and always saying the right thing wake up and smell the coffee it just isn't so pastors are human beings and we are subject to the same frailties as everybody else and that's just the fact of the matter and let's move on any questions about that by the way anybody okay moderator or other designee of the board of elders shall preside at all church business meetings conducting same in accordance with these bylaws and Robert's rules of order term of office shall be for one calendar year that's a moderator and he may succeed himself in office as elected and we are a church that has elders and we do not have any kind of age specification for elders it's interesting that the bible speaks of a plurality of elders in each congregation and the influence and authority that they are supposed to have but it doesn't say anything about how many elders there ought to be in a church and it doesn't say anything about their age however the word elder means something in the word it's just another way of spelling older an elder is older older than what older than who well older than most of his peers so that he's a senior as it were and I think one of the reasons there isn't an age specification in there is because in many areas throughout the world particularly where new churches maybe are beginning there may be primarily a group of younger people who are forming that church and the oldest person in the church is 35 years old well I don't consider that an elder

I consider that a younger but comparatively speaking if that 35 year old is a senior in the church then he is an elder relatively speaking he is elder to the rest of the people so the idea is that wisdom is generally considered to be more available in an older mind and an older person and even that is not a slam dunk someone has said there's no fool like an old fool and there are plenty of old fools it would be wonderful if you just automatically as you put on years of maturity if you automatically just became smarter and wiser and kinder and nicer and all the rest but it doesn't work that way because we probably all know some 60 year old men and women who have never grown up they still make foolish decisions they still make all kinds of errors in their living etc and not to say that the older you get the less error prone you are these things are so many of them are relative and we all know that an older age is no guarantee of accompanying wisdom there are a lot of old stupid people ok there are a lot of young stupid people and there are a lot of people who are stupid in the middle and the difference between stupid and ignorant is this if you are ignorant that just means you don't know but you're open to know you're available to learn you just haven't learned but if you're stupid that means you don't even want to learn you're just locked into stupidity and someone has said you can educate ignorance but stupidity is clean to the bone you can't do anything with those people so our goal here is to spiritually educate people and make them spiritually mature and grown up and that's that's our that's one of our main callings so there shall be a minimum of six elders elected by the members to serve three years the number of elders may be increased and not more than one per twenty members and attendees enrolled they shall be men of spiritual maturity who fulfill the qualifications of first

Timothy three and Titus one and acts three acts six three and one third of the elders terms will expire annually each may serve two full three year terms consecutively after which he shall be ineligible to serve for one year this protects us from having a perpetually in office board of elders and it requires when someone has served two full terms he has to go off the board of elders he is no longer in a position to hold that office he may be reelected after he's been off the office for one year he's ineligible to be put back on but what this does for the safety and the variety of the congregation it assures the congregation that the board of elders will not just be made up of a group of older men who were set in their ways and they call all the shots because that's what we want to prevent and besides they don't make the final decision anyway when it comes to any decision of any significance like the expenditure of a considerable amount of money or the calling of a pastor or something like that all the board of elders can do is make a decision among themselves then when the business meeting is called chairman of the board of elders says the elders have considered this and this is the recommendation that we make to the congregation and the congregation may say that's good we'll go along with that they vote on it and they decide to accept the recommendation of the board of elders and then it is put into practice or after discussion the congregation idea and

[37 : 47] I'm encouraging people someone may stand up as an elder and say I'm encouraging people to vote against that so a vote is taken and the position or recommendation of the board of elders is not accepted it's rejected and the congregation has the final say and again in our 50 year history we've never had that happen and I think the reason that we haven't is because the congregation has a certain respect and confidence in the board of elders to thoroughly consider a situation discuss it debate it among themselves reach a decision that they think is biblical and fair decision and that's what they make a recommendation then to the whole congregation and explain how or why they reached that decision and we have never had a recommendation from the board of elders overturned and

I tell you that is a beautiful thing and I say that because it speaks of a unanimity of spirit and a cooperation among the people to be able to discuss things like that and it's we have enjoyed we have enjoyed a blessed 50 years of splendid cooperation and attitude and comity and everything that goes with it and as a pastor I have been so blessed with that and we all know horror stories of churches that have factions fighting and going on and this group always sits over there and this group that doesn't agree with them always sits over there the scriptures talk about maintaining the spirit of unity and the bond of peace and when the word of God is taught and appropriated by the people it results in their mature growth and it results in attitude adjustment and that's important that's very important any questions or comments anybody secretary keeps the minutes of all the board meetings acts as a treasurer of the benevolent funds the elders shall assist the pastor in the exercise watch care of the members and attendees visiting the sick and aged exercising concern and so on and so on and pastor's responsibilities have already been enumerated and as a pastor

I do not make automatic house calls I guess neither do doctors anymore but there was a time when pastors just automatically visited people maybe once or twice a year and very often unannounced you just dropped in well today we consider that inconsiderate and often inconvenient and I want to make it clear that as your pastor I am available for a house visit but it has to come from you if you request it I'll be there and I'll be glad to call on you at your home but I'm not going to invite myself if you want to invite me in and my wife or just me or you have something personal that you want to discuss that's fine all it takes is a phone call just let me know Pastor Marv we'd like you to come and visit and we've got some things that we'd like to discuss with you fine

I'll be there that is not a problem but I have to have an invitation otherwise I don't just assume that you appreciate impromptu visits and I think that would be someone said the last thing that any homemaker needs is she's standing there with her hair up in curlers and is wearing her night gown and it's 930 in the morning and she looks down the walk and here comes her pastor up the walk no woman needs that so and I can I can understand that so anyway we want you to know that that we are available for visits but we request an invitation with the termination of the pastor's ministry for whatever reason and my termination is approaching by the way we don't know exactly when that will be but at my age and ongoing infirmities it's probably just a question of time and may not be too much time when you will be required to replace me with another pastor and the elders shall constitute the pulpit committee and shall with the aid of the members seek to obtain a man of God's choosing to fill the office of pastor and it and it would be the elders responsibility to make contact with possible successors and perhaps invite them in to fill the pulpit for a time or two times and to see what the mix is like and what the message is like and what the attitude is like for everybody and if the elders are sufficiently impressed they may request a visit and talk with the man personally and meet his family and they may decide to recommend that person or they may not go that far they may not just pursue that they may want to call and hear somebody else and you may hear you may invite in one person and that will be the one you want or you may invite three or four people and there are all kinds of things to consider but at any rate when the time comes to select the pastor that's the congregation the board of elders can recommend we recommend that you accept

Pastor Jones as your next pastor and the congregation will vote on that and I remember when we had that vote one time it was when Jed Rosenthal was here as an interim and he Jed received 100% of the votes and I don't know if you have any idea how rare that is but that's rare that's very rare and I didn't when I came back after Jed left when I came back and y'all voted to receive me I didn't even receive 100% there was one person who voted against me and I'm still trying to find out I don't have any idea I would I would have I probably would have said after 50 years in ministry it might have been my wife but

[45 : 00] Barb was gone and she was with the Lord so couldn't have been her but anyway and by the way she was she was the most incredible wife and pastor's wife that you could imagine and Marie has followed in her train I have had two unbelievably capable loving competent diligent women in my life and my ministry would would not have been anything close to what it is without those two women it's just just amazing and by the way my sweet Marie is under the weather today she won't be here so she was feeling kind of poorly and I I know she really hated to miss Mother's Day but I said honey you need to be in bed and I sent her back to bed and she she's with us in spirit and I'm almost out of time so we'll continue this and finish it next week and that will be our final session and you'll have opportunity for any questions that you may have about the doctrine about the statement of faith we left over and I want to allow a couple minutes now for questions and we've got a bunch of cookies back there and I'm counting on these young people to eat their share of cookies this morning okay

John first John and then the second John first John second John do we have a third John yeah okay go ahead we've known some churches that had elder rule and there were some problems because he wasn't brought up to the congregation and so I can see that our form of government is the best well it has served us wonderfully well for these 50 years and I have certainly had no complaints about that and we are blessed with the congregation and with the board of elders and I have never had a board of elders that did not really have sensitivity to the pastor to the congregation and were my chief cheerleaders and I just have received tons of encouragement from board of elders and most of you people don't know them like I do but they are they are cream of the crop people and I appreciate them

John second John well I appreciate that personal testimony I do appreciate that I do think that membership and maybe there is nothing in the Bible that talks about an official membership in a local church it just doesn't require it and because it doesn't we just cannot tell people you're out of God's will if you're not an official member here because that's not true and at the same time I do think that membership and the ability to have some say in the direction of the church and in the decisions of the church someone who is a member is willing to take some responsibility for their part in the church and I appreciate that and it also it also conveys a kind of maybe emotional belonging sense connection and for some that's important depending on the way they're wired and for others it's not that big a deal so

I say to each his own you're more than welcome to attend here and to take advantage of whatever that is offered including the cookies and no one is going to make any kind of demand on you for anything for giving that's one thing that I didn't touch on that I probably should mention and that is we do not pass an offering plate and I won't go into the reasons for that but we do have a box on the wall right there and that means anybody that wants to contribute to the ongoing ministry of Grace Bible Church can just drop what they want in the box and nobody knows who gives what except people who count the money and have to make the deposit at the bank and deposit the checks and all of that and these people hold everything in confidence so that nobody knows and I as a pastor

I as a pastor have no idea who gives what it's none of my business frankly I don't want to know and I don't know and I don't have access to those financial records and I don't want it so that just kind of helps to keep everything else on an even keel too any other comments or questions Gary along with what John was saying I think we started going out here sometime in the mid 60s or early 70s and we were members for a while and I don't remember the circumstances but we were not members for several years and attended even though we weren't members and then we decided we ought to be members again except Dottie was a little concerned about oh I hate to go out there and stand in front and Marie told her says you don't have to worry about a thing the only thing you have to do is crawl from the back of the church up the center aisle well by the way when we have the annual membership renewal thing we just put an insert in the bulletin and that's in there for several weeks and it takes all of maybe 30 seconds to fill it out and then you just drop it in the offering box and then when the membership thing is tallied your name is included and if there's a date a change of address or phone number or something like that that's changed and and we keep it up to date that way but if for some reason like maybe because of extended illness somebody isn't here or we've got a number of snowbirds where people go to

[51 : 38] Florida and they're there for the winter and they don't sign up all of these people whoever does not sign up who's a member but they don't sign up for another year we send an official notice and say we noticed that you didn't sign up maybe that was just an oversight or you weren't present and you wish to maintain your membership in which case we'll be glad to do that or if you really intended to drop your membership please advise us accordingly and we will honor that request as well and sometimes when people move away the move is permanent and they join another church someplace else and just they don't want to be a member of two churches and I appreciate that so they're dropped one place and picked up another so anyhow next week it isn't that I'm absent-minded it's just that I can't remember where I put anything and I'll bring I'll bring your copy of the bylaws and we'll see to it that you get them have them to look at and you can ask any questions that you may have and we'll take it from there so next week will be our final session and then those who are applying for membership will be able to do so because they will have had the material right here and now so thank you you are dismissed enjoy your coffee break