

# **SOVEREIGN GRACE MINISTRIES**

## **Membership Agreement for Sovereign Grace Churches**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A FAMILY OF CHURCHES**

Sovereign Grace Ministries (“Sovereign Grace”) is a family of churches united by the gospel and for the gospel. While we have a deep and abiding commitment to our relationships, it is our mutual dedication to celebrating, protecting, and applying the gospel that unites and defines us as a family of churches. Accurate comprehension and faithful application of the gospel are essential to maintaining a passion for starting, establishing, and strengthening local churches for God’s glory.

Since our inception in 1982, Sovereign Grace has been led by a team of men dedicated to planting and building local churches. We describe our doctrine as being essentially Reformed, with a commitment to charismatic practice as biblically defined. As part of our effort to serve local churches, we provide apostolic care, church-planting development and support, conferences and events, music, book and audio publishing, and the Pastors College (for training pastors). We are immensely grateful that God has allowed us to make our contribution to an essential goal in redemptive history: the establishment of local churches that testify to the truth of the gospel.

Like most church associations, Sovereign Grace has a defined form of church government based on our best attempts at understanding and applying biblical theology. While our passion is not for our polity but for “Christ and him crucified,” our church polity provides us the form and structure for expressing that passion. Thus the following three principles form the foundation for local-church polity within Sovereign Grace:

- Plurality Among Elders (Local Church)
- The Senior Pastor (Local Church)
- Partnership with Apostolic Ministry (Sovereign Grace)

The purpose of this document is to define the relationship between affiliated local churches (member churches) and Sovereign Grace (the apostolic ministry).

## MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT

This section defines the commitments between member churches and Sovereign Grace towards the purpose of accomplishing the shared mission (or partnership) of starting, establishing, and strengthening local churches with the gospel, for God's glory<sup>1</sup>.

- **Sovereign Grace Commitments**

- Sovereign Grace commits to steward our partnership and resources for the mission of the gospel, as expressed primarily through:
  - Apostolic ministry as described in *Polity: Serving and Leading the Local Church*, Number Two in the *Perspectives* series
  - Church planting
  - International church ministry
- Sovereign Grace commits to provide ministry resources such as music, books, and audio teaching to serve member churches.
- Sovereign Grace commits to provide training venues for member churches through conferences/events (**both nationally and regionally**) for member-church leaders and members, and through the Pastors College for the purpose of training pastors.
- Sovereign Grace commits to steward wisely the resources given by member churches. This commitment includes performing an annual independent audit of its financial statements and providing copies of the audited financial statements to member churches.

- **Member-Church Commitments**

- To ensure substantial theological harmony and methodological agreement within Sovereign Grace, member churches commit to:
  - Subscribe to the following documents:
    - The Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith
    - The Sovereign Grace Ordination Process
  - Be in substantial agreement with the *Perspectives* series, as updated from time to time, and currently consisting of:
    - *Sovereign Grace and the Glorious Mystery of Election*
    - *Polity: Serving and Leading the Local Church*
    - *Am I Called? Discerning the Summons to Ministry*
    - *Missiology: Entering the Field of the Lord*

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that Sovereign Grace has no members that exercise the rights and powers of members of a corporation under the laws of the State of Maryland. However, Sovereign Grace as a family of churches has member churches determined by the ecclesiastical qualifications described in this Agreement and governed by the Holy Bible, but such membership conveys no standing, responsibility or authority for governance of Sovereign Grace as a corporation.

- Member-church pastors/leaders must demonstrate a humble willingness to open their lives and local church to the gracious evaluation of a Sovereign Grace representative. In the event of any situation involving one or more local-church leaders suspected of heresy or significant **sin/impropriety in sexual, financial, or other significant matters that threaten the unity of the entire church**, the church leadership commits to involve the leadership of Sovereign Grace as soon as possible.
  - To jointly carry out the mission of Sovereign Grace, member churches commit to a goal of giving 10 percent of their tithes and offerings to the Mission Fund of Sovereign Grace, and to prayerfully consider participating in all special offerings initiated among all Sovereign Grace Churches.
  - Member churches commit, where possible, to send appropriate church pastors/leaders on a regular basis to applicable conferences and training opportunities provided by Sovereign Grace.
  - Member churches agree to utilize the Pastors College of Sovereign Grace Ministries as a primary training context for future pastors.
  - Member churches agree to respect copyright ownership of music, books, audio resources, and other materials owned and/or licensed by Sovereign Grace. Prior to copying, distributing, publishing, performing, creating derivative works from, or otherwise using any Sovereign Grace materials, Member churches must abide by Sovereign Grace's standard policies and procedures for using such materials or seek written permission from Sovereign Grace. Policies and procedures for downloading and copying music and audio resources from Sovereign Grace's website are available on the website.
- **Joint Commitments**
    - No agency or similar legal relationship is created by this Membership Agreement or otherwise exists among the member churches and Sovereign Grace. Indeed, we consider the relational element within Sovereign Grace, displayed in the way we seek to practice love, honor, integrity, and accountability, as representing a more profound commitment to glorifying God than could be represented by any legal relationship.
    - Member churches acknowledge that the "**SOVEREIGN GRACE®**" name and logo are trademarks owned by Sovereign Grace Ministries. Sovereign Grace grants to each Member church a nonexclusive license to use the Sovereign Grace name and logo to identify its affiliation with Sovereign Grace, only so long as the Member church remains a Sovereign Grace affiliated church pursuant to this Membership Agreement. Member churches' use of the name and logo must always be in a manner consistent with Sovereign Grace's usage guidelines, as may be issued from time to time. Consistent with Sovereign Grace's faithful stewardship obligations of its trademarks, Sovereign Grace has the right to inspect Member churches' use of the name and logo at any time upon reasonable request. All goodwill accruing to the trademarks inures to

Sovereign Grace's benefit. Member churches may not modify the Sovereign Grace logo in any way not expressly permitted in the usage guidelines or challenge Sovereign Grace's rights in the trademarks. Member churches agree that, upon termination of affiliation with Sovereign Grace, the Member church shall promptly cease use of the Sovereign Grace name and logo.

- Member churches and Sovereign Grace agree to organize and operate so as to produce high accountability and to prudently manage risks, including adopting legally compliant organizing documents and church-member covenants deemed reasonable, acquiring appropriate insurance, and implementing prudent risk management policies and practices.
- Member churches and Sovereign Grace as independent and autonomously governed entities jointly agree to be responsible for all respective claims, loss, damage, liability, or expenses occasioned or claimed by reason of acts or neglects of their own employees or visitors or of independent contractors. Accordingly each entity whose alleged action or inaction gives rise to third-party claims against the others will indemnify and hold harmless the others for any such claims or expense.
- Member churches may discontinue their affiliation with Sovereign Grace at any time with or without cause by providing written notice to Sovereign Grace and participating in an exit interview with representatives appointed by the apostolic team of Sovereign Grace. Likewise, Sovereign Grace may remove a church from member-church status through the same procedure. When a member church chooses to no longer affiliate with Sovereign Grace, the apostolic team of Sovereign Grace will relinquish its role in a God-honoring manner, and grant that church the freedom to withdraw unless the leadership of the member church is suspected of heresy, immorality, financial impropriety or substantial and unrepentant breaches of the leadership qualifications appearing in 1 Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1: 6-9.
- Member churches and Sovereign Grace commit to resolve any disputes that may arise in a God-honoring manner in accordance with biblical principles.

The signatures represent agreement by the member church and Sovereign Grace that they have read this document and commit to the terms and principles contained herein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sovereign Grace Ministries  
Executive Director

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Date

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Sovereign Grace Ministries  
Apostolic Team Member

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Date

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Member Church  
Senior Pastor

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Date