

**Grace Community Church**  
**Sexual Offender Participation Policy**  
**Adopted 2/21/2023**

Grace Community Church (GCC) seeks to heed the admonition of the Bible to show compassion to others, reflect the love of Christ, and to look not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others. GCC also seeks to reflect the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God to all who want to attend our worship services or become covenant members of this church. We encourage all present members and attenders of GCC to cultivate this same grace, forbearance, and acceptance of every person who walks through our doors, including those who are registered sexual offenders and predators (RSOs).

As the gospel is meant for all, we welcome all to our worship and church community. However, in order for GCC to be a safe place for all who attend, individuals who are RSOs must comply with the following policy in order to attend our worship services or participate in any of our activities.

The Biblical basis for the careful and prudent oversight of our congregation, our children, and sexual offenders, along with the basis for graciously including all redeemed sinners in our church community, is found in the following passages:

- Proverbs 22:3 The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.
- Matthew 18:6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.
- Acts 20:28-29 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
- 1 Timothy 1:15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

The Elders of GCC retain the exclusive right to deny attendance, participation, and/or membership to any individual who fails to comply with the following policy, or to any individual whose behavior, criminal conviction, and/or sexual offender status gives reason to believe that the individual would endanger others, regardless of policy compliance. In such cases, failure to comply with GCC's request to vacate the campus or church activity will result in reporting to law enforcement for criminal trespassing. Additionally, offenders are disqualified from participation if their victims are members or attenders of GCC.

## Policies:

### 1. Reporting Requirements:

- a. Any RSO who is interested in attending or participating in any GCC services and activities is expected to self-disclose his or her status as a registered sexual offender (including his/her specific designation) to an Elder **prior to attending** any GCC services or activities. Whether through disclosure or discovery, as soon as the registered status of an offender is realized, the protocols of this policy will be expected to be honored or the offender may not attend any GCC services or activities.
- b. The RSO must have a pastoral interview with one or more GCC Elders and complete and sign a background release consent form authorizing GCC to conduct a criminal background check for the state of Florida and any other relevant states or jurisdiction. In cases of ongoing legal requirements, this consent form includes permission for the GCC Elders to communicate openly with the RSO's Parole Officer, Sex Offender Treatment Therapist, Social Worker or any other officer or professional which court rulings have required of the RSO.
- c. Overseeing Elder – A GCC Elder will be assigned to oversee the RSO's care. He or a designee will consult with local law enforcement agencies and/or other sources to evaluate the participation request and formulate a ministry plan. The proposed plan regarding the RSO's request to attend or become a member of GCC must be in accordance with this policy.
- d. For reasons of transparency and accountability with GCC members and attenders, a list of all RSOs who attend GCC services and activities will be made available to the congregation upon request along with a fuller description of particular circumstances as the Elders deem necessary. Anyone seeking such information will be reminded of God's grace toward sinners and the Biblical requirement not to slander, gossip, ostracize, or otherwise mistreat RSOs who wish to worship and serve God in our church community.
- e. At such time as an individual ceases to be a registered offender, a copy of the "Certificate and Order of Discharge," or a similarly equivalent Court document, must be submitted to the individual's Overseeing Elder to be included in the offender's file. At that time, an evaluation will be conducted to determine if and what continuing restrictions will remain in place.

### 2. Participation Requirements:

- a. The RSO is prohibited from entering any GCC children's ministry areas or participating as part of GCC's children's ministry. This includes checking their own children in for children/student ministries or having them attend children's events. This restriction will persist even if RSO status is removed.
- b. Though the RSO may not attend any children or youth-oriented services or activities, the offender is permitted to attend services and activities where children may be present, and is permitted to be in the church foyer, hallway, sanctuary, adult classrooms, or outside area, so long as a Designated Escort is present.
- c. Designated Escort - The Overseeing Elder charged with supervising the RSO's care will select individuals to serve as the RSO's Designated Escort. A Designated Escort must accompany

the RSO at all times while the RSO is in attendance at GCC services and events. A Designated Escort cannot be a member of the RSO's family. Before arriving at GCC to attend a worship service or any of its events, RSOs will check-in with the Designated Escort via a software application. The Designated Escort will greet the RSO when they arrive at a predetermined location. After the worship service or event, RSOs will check out in the same manner via the software application.

- d. The RSO will not be given access to the GCC member directory.

Because this is a formal agreement with a check-in-check-out process, RSOs must sign the **GCC Worship Service and Events Participation Agreement for Registered Sex Offenders** (below) indicating that they understand the requirements and implications.

## **GCC Worship Service and Events Participation Agreement for Registered Sex Offenders**

I agree to the following conditions to participate in GCC worship services and activities:

1. I will be assigned a GCC Overseeing Elder who will supervise my pastoral care and ensure that this agreement is being followed.
2. I will fully cooperate with (if applicable) all court mandated requirements – meeting with my parole officer, case manager, certified sex offender treatment therapist, or other mandates stipulated in my case. I recognize that such requirements take precedence over any less restrictive parts of this agreement.
3. I have fully communicated what these legal expectations are to my Overseeing Elder, provided the name and phone number of professionals and officers overseeing my care, and signed a release of information permitting them to speak with my Overseeing Elder and any designee.
4. I will (if applicable) get approval from my parole officer or functional equivalent to attend GCC. A copy of a signed authorization has been provided to my Overseeing Elder.
5. I have signed a background release consent form authorizing GCC to conduct a criminal background check.
6. I will provide my RSO profile which will be made available to all GCC Elders, security team members, and leaders of the children/student ministries.
7. I understand that my RSO profile will be provided to other church members or attenders upon request or as deemed advisable by the elders.
8. I will not attend any GCC services or events without being accompanied by my Overseeing Elder or a Designated Escort. My Overseeing Elder must approve other individuals to serve in this capacity. If my Overseeing Elder or Designated Escort is not available, I will not attend any GCC services or activities.
9. Upon my arrival at a GCC service or activity, I will check in with my Designated Escort and meet him/her at the designated location (as determined by my Overseeing Elder). I will stay within casual conversation distance with my Designated Escort or Overseeing Elder for the duration of the service or activity.
10. I will not serve in any capacity at GCC or its events without prior approval from my Overseeing Elder.
11. I acknowledge and agree that all children and student areas are off limits at all times, even if my own children are attending GCC and are present and participating in GCC's children/student ministries or activities.
12. I will promptly leave any area on GCC property where children are present, with the exception of a populated church foyer, hallway, sanctuary, adult classrooms, or outside area, where adults are present.
13. I will not have any physical contact with a child at GCC, including, without limitation, sitting next to a child other than my own, holding a child on my lap, or being hugged or kissed by a child at GCC. If a child other than my own approaches me to talk, I will politely acknowledge him or her without any physical contact and promptly leave the area.
14. I will under no circumstances take a child of any GCC member or attender family, other than my own, home with me or transport him or her anywhere at any time.

15. I will only use the restrooms after my Overseeing Elder or Designated Escort has entered and found no children in the restroom. The escort will remain in the restroom area, or in the case of individual restrooms (in facilities other than GCC), the escort will wait outside the restroom.
16. I will not attend a GCC small group or other organized home or off-campus ministry event without a Designated Escort.
17. I understand that I will not receive access to the GCC member directory and will not attempt to gain access to it, nor contact, via social media or otherwise, any child of a GCC member or attender without express permission from the parent of the child.
18. I will not visit the home of any GCC member or attender where children are present, without first consulting my Designated Elder. He will ensure that the guardian(s) or parent(s) of that family are aware of my history before permitting me to enter their home.
19. I understand that my Designated Escorts or Overseeing Elder will (a) fully cooperate with any legal inquiry and (b) provide our check-in/check-out records should they be requested.
20. I understand that the provisions of this Participation Agreement do not create any personal and/or legal rights against GCC, its leaders, or its members. I hereby waive any rights and release and discharge GCC, its leaders, and its members from and against any and all claims or causes of action whatsoever that I may have now or in the future against the Church arising out of or in any way connected with my participation in church activities or resulting from my execution of this agreement.

I understand the above conditions. I submit to these conditions and wish to attend Grace Community Church. I submit to the requirements of this policy and to my Overseeing Elder at GCC. I accept that if I break any of the above conditions, I will no longer be allowed to attend any GCC services or its events and, if I have become a covenant member of the church, the elders may make an immediate recommendation for the congregation to remove me from membership.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone number/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name used in RSO's Case File: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of GCC Overseeing Elder: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of GCC Overseeing Elder: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_