

Constitution of Trinity Church

Preamble

This church body shall be known as Trinity Church. We the members of Trinity Church do hereby establish and submit ourselves to the following constitution as a means to govern the affairs of this church.

Standards and Objectives

The purpose of the church is to glorify God through submission to His Word, to build up the saints through doctrinal and efficacious preaching of the whole counsel of God, to proclaim grace in Christ to sinners, and to faithfully observe Christ's sacraments. Convinced that Jesus Christ (as found in the primary standard of the 66 canonical books of the Old and New Testament Scriptures), the Head of the church, will protect and guide us, we seek to obey Scripture through the following standards for the orderly and scriptural government of Trinity Church. These standards do not supplant Scripture, but rather seek to be an expression of biblical church government under God. While seeking to be biblical, these standards are primarily procedural; the doctrinal position of the church may be found in the Statement of Faith (*which is contained in Appendix 1*)

Article I. Members and Electors

The procedures of membership outlined below are designed solely for the purpose of maintaining scriptural and accountable local church government (Heb. 13:17), such that our affairs are conducted in decency and order (1 Cor. 14:40). In no way is our practice of membership to be construed in such a way as to disrupt our Christian unity and fellowship with true saints who attend church elsewhere (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 3:1-4).

A. Household Membership

1. Membership in the church will be normally reckoned by household. However independently living individuals may also be considered for membership. A household will be eligible when the head of that household (Eph 5:22-24; Acts 16:15), a woman whose husband does not attend church (1 Cor. 7:12-14), or an individual meets the following criteria:
 - a. Professes faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Rom. 10:9-10)
 - b. Exhibits the fruit of the Spirit as a way of life. (Matt. 7:22-23; Gal. 5:22-26)
 - c. Has been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19)
 - d. Submits himself to the government of this church (Heb. 13:7,17)
2. The Session may admit eligible households or individuals into membership in Trinity Church based upon the agreement of all members of the session after having heard their profession of faith and ascertaining they have been baptized by a Christian church. Those seeking membership who make a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but who have not been baptized in a Christian church may be considered for membership after being baptized. Letters of transfer from another Christian church will be accepted, but will not mitigate the requirement to meet with the elders.
3. The elders will maintain a membership list, with the members of each household listed in a clear manner, including names and yes/no entries for baptism. This membership list will be maintained by the elders, and is not to be confused with the church directory of addresses and phone numbers.
4. The Session of the church recognizes, through admitting the head of the household into such membership, that he is responsible before God for the spiritual condition of that household. Under the headship of Christ, the administration of church ordinances and church discipline remains with the Session. However, in such administration, the Session is to respect the spiritual responsibility of the head of the household.
5. When the criteria listed above have been fulfilled, a household or individual will be formally received into the membership of Trinity Church with a profession of faith before the congregation on the Lord's Day.

B. Responsibilities of Members

1. Members of Trinity Church shall devote themselves to both private and public means of grace including the regular attendance of appointed church services and fellowship meetings, special meetings or conferences; private and family devotions with Bible reading and prayer; and the showing of hospitality to the saints.
2. Members of Trinity Church shall devote themselves to the service of their fellow Christians and church members, sharing both material and spiritual blessings with one another.
3. Members of Trinity Church shall, in obedience to the Word of God and as a token of God's gifts to us, give cheerfully and regularly a tithe (10%) of their increase to the ministry and labor of this church (Matthew 23:23; 1 Corinthians 9:1-14; 16:1; Hebrews 7:1-10).
4. Members of Trinity Church shall recognize, respect, and submit to the lawful government and discipline of the elders of Trinity Church (Hebrews 13:7,17).
5. Members of Trinity Church shall comport themselves with godly attitude, speech, and conduct toward their fellow church members, being slow to take offense and ready to resolve conflicts according to the instruction of Scripture (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20).
6. Conflict resolution. This church is committed to resolving all disputes that may arise within our body in a Biblical manner. This commitment is based on God's command that Christians should strive earnestly to live at peace with one another (Matthew 5:9; John 17:20-23; Romans 12:18; Ephesians 4:1-3) and that when disputes arise, we should resolve them according to the principles set forth in Holy Scripture (Proverbs 19:11; Matthew 5:23-25; 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Galatians 6:1). We believe that these commands and principles are obligatory on all Christians and absolutely essential for the well-being and work of the church; therefore, any and all disputes in this church shall be resolved according to Biblical principles as provided in this constitution.
 - a. When a member of this church has a conflict with or is concerned about the behavior of another member, he shall attempt to resolve the matter as follows: (1) The offended or concerned person shall prayerfully examine himself and take responsibility for his contribution to a problem (Matthew 7:3-5), and he shall prayerfully seek to discern whether the offense is so serious that it cannot be overlooked (Proverbs 19:11; see also Proverbs 12:16; 15:18; 17:14; 20:3; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13; 1 Peter 4:8). (2) If the offense is too serious to overlook, the offended or concerned person shall go, repeatedly if necessary, and talk to the offender in an effort to resolve the matter personally and privately, having first confessed his own wrongdoing (Matthew 18:15). (3) If the offender will not listen and if the problem is too serious to overlook, the offended or concerned person shall return with one or two other people who will attempt to help the parties resolve their differences (Matthew 18:16); these other people may be members or officers of the church, other respected Christians in the community or trained mediators or arbitrators (conciliators) from a Christian conciliation ministry. At the request of either party to the dispute, the church shall make every effort to assist the parties in resolving their differences and being reconciled.
 - b. Conflicts involving doctrine or church discipline shall likewise be resolved according to the procedures set forth in the constitution on church discipline.
 - c. If a dispute arises between a member and the church itself and cannot be resolved through the internal procedures described above, it shall be resolved as follows:
 - i. The dispute shall be submitted to mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, and judgment upon an arbitration award may be entered in any court having jurisdiction.
 - ii. All mediators and arbitrators shall be in agreement with the doctrinal standards of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches, unless this requirement is modified or waived by all parties to the dispute.
 - iii. If a dispute submitted to arbitration involves a decision reached by an official judicatory (court or ruling body) of this church or of our presbytery, the arbitrators shall uphold the highest judicatory's decision on matters of doctrine and church discipline.
 - iv. This section covers the church as a body and its agents—officers, and volunteers—with regard to any actions they may take in their official capacities.

- v. This section covers any and all disputes or claims arising from or related to church membership, doctrine, policy, practice, counseling, discipline, decisions, actions, or failures to act, including claims based on civil statute or for personal injury.
- vi. By joining this church, all members agree that these methods shall provide the sole remedy for any dispute arising against the church or its agents, and they waive their right to file any legal action against the church in a civil court or agency (1 Cor 6:1-8).
- vii. If a dispute or claim involves an alleged injury or damage to which the church's insurance applies, and if the church's insurer refuses to submit to mediation or arbitration as described in this section, either the church or the member alleging the injury or damage may declare that this section is no longer binding with regard to that part of the dispute or claim to which the church's insurance applies.

C. Transfer of Membership

1. If a member household or individual member of Trinity Church in good standing requests to be transferred to the care of another Christian church, the elders will grant the request, and transfer them with a blessing.
2. If a member household or individual member of Trinity Church requests to be released from membership during disciplinary proceedings against the individual or anyone in the household, the elders will deny the request until the disciplinary matter is resolved and will give their utmost attention regarding their responsibilities in the matter.
3. If a member household or individual member is moving from Trinity Church's geographical area, before they leave, the elders will exhort them on their duty to find a new church home as soon as possible, preferably before they move. If they have not joined themselves to a new church within six months the elders will release them from membership with a letter of admonition. This will be done even if in the interim, a situation arises which would normally call for the disciplinary intervention of the church.

D. Electors

Those members of Trinity Church who vote in church elections and at heads of household meetings will be called electors.

1. Qualifications for electors: Only male heads of households, who have been members for at least six months, who are regularly attending, are not under church discipline, shall be entitled to vote at church elections and heads of households meetings. Individual men may be considered as a household, as approved by the elders, for purposes of voting. Female members that do not have male voting representation shall communicate their concerns and opinions by way of the elders.
2. Authority of electors: Electors may vote and provide input at heads of households meetings.
3. Qualified electors: The elders will qualify electors according to the above criteria. Two weeks prior to any election to church office, the election will be announced and the ballot will be provided to the electors. Those who desire to vote but who do not receive a ballot may contact the elders. If qualified, they will be provided a ballot in time for the election. Signed absentee ballots of qualified electors will be counted as votes but will not be used in the count to establish a quorum.
4. Elections: Elections will be conducted at appropriate times set by the elders.

Article II. The Sacraments

A. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The Lord Jesus Christ has given the Church two sacraments, or ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper—that are signs and seals of the covenant of grace and which replace the signs of circumcision and Passover (Matthew 28:19; Romans 4:11; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 11:23-26; Colossians 2:11-12). These signs chiefly represent Christ and His benefits and place a visible difference between those that belong to the Church and the rest of the world. The sign of baptism is initiatory and therefore to be administered only once, and the Supper of the Lord is to be observed regularly until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Baptism

1. Water baptism, as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, solemnly admits the baptized into the community of the Church. Baptism initially marks out Christ's disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) and, therefore, those who are baptized must live in accordance with the testimony of this baptism. In this, we recognize the objectivity of the covenant sign and membership in the covenant community of the Church. Baptized persons have a non-negotiable covenantal obligation to live in accordance with their baptism.
2. When unbaptized persons apply for admission into the communing membership of the church, they shall, ordinarily, make a public profession of their faith in the presence of the congregation and thereafter be baptized.
3. When a baptized person joins Trinity Church, the elders acknowledge this baptism as Christian baptism by receiving him into the membership of the church. This will not be affected by whether or not the baptism was administered in infancy.
4. If the baptism was not a Trinitarian baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the individual will be instructed on his responsibility to be baptized at the first opportunity, and subsequently baptized. As an act of an ecclesiastical government, a valid baptism does not depend upon the personal integrity of the person administering the baptism.
5. Concerning the mode of baptism. Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary, but baptism is acceptably administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person. Baptism, as a sign of the covenant of grace, ought to reflect the reality of which it is a sign and therefore is properly administered by the water coming upon the person rather than the person coming into the water. This accords well with the reality of the Gospel, salvation by grace, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Spirit baptism. It is recognized that churches have historically varied in practice, and it is admitted that the form of baptism—whether by immersion, sprinkling, or pouring—is of less importance than the substance of this covenant sign; therefore, we will not make this a point of contention but shall understand that it is, at times, a matter of conscience for the individual believer (or the head of the household) in agreement with the elders.

C. The Lord's Supper

1. The sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord's Supper, or Communion, is a sacrament of the Church, given by Jesus Christ. This sacrament, which is to be observed by the Church, is for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus in His death, sealing all the benefits of that death unto true believers for their growth and the engagement of them unto Christ like behavior in thought, speech, and deed.
2. The Lord's Supper, or Communion, should be observed frequently; Trinity Church will, out of prudence, observe it on a weekly basis.
3. Elders administering the Lord's Supper shall instruct or make notification to those present concerning who should partake of the Lord's Supper, indicating that any who are baptized are encouraged to come. Likewise, the elders may admonish all professing believers to examine themselves, to discern the Lord's Body, and to partake of the Supper in a worthy manner (not failing to consider reconciliation with other members of the church; see Matthew 5:23-24). Coming to the Lord's Table is a joyous means of grace to nourish and sustain our faith. Unless barred from the Table by the elders the covenant member should come. Since Christians are warned about faulty (unworthy) participation in this sacrament (1 Corinthians 11:27-32), it is evident that this sign is more than a *mere* memorial. Those who disregard this Scriptural teaching by participating in the sacrament in an unworthy manner will experience more harm than good. Covenantal blessings and curses are associated with the Supper of the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:29,30). Therefore while all covenant members are encouraged to come to the Table, anyone in sin must first confess that sin.
4. Since by our Lord's appointment, this sacrament sets forth the communion of saints, the elders (at their discretion), may invite all those who are baptized, professing the true faith of Christ, and who are members in good standing of any evangelical church, to participate in the sacrament.
5. The Session of Trinity Church allows for the position and practice of covenant, or paedo-, communion, in which the baptized children of covenant members are allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. It is recognized that this position is at variance with some Christians of the Reformed faith, and those who subscribe to this position are encouraged to do so without contention and with humility.

Article III. Duties of Church Officers

A. Elders

1. Responsibilities of elders: The collective responsibilities of the elders include, but are not limited to, oversight of the following:
 - a. Ruling/shepherding (1 Peter 5:1-4).
 - b. Equipping (Ephesians 4:11-12).
 - c. Prayer/fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3).
 - d. Teaching/preaching (1 Timothy 5:17).
 - e. Administering church discipline and restoration (1 Corinthians 5:1-7).
 - f. Attending the sick (James 5:14-15).
 - g. Delegating responsibilities to the deacons such as defining the responsibilities of church volunteers and their oversight.
 - h. Approval of the budget.
2. Conduct of Session meetings: All usual business of the Session will be conducted at the regular Session meetings, or at special meetings called for a particular purpose. The Session will appoint one of their number to clerk for the meetings. The Session will appoint another of their number as moderator. For those who have concerns they would like the Session to address, they should make them known to one or more of the elders prior to the regular Session meeting. The date, time, and place of the regular Session meeting shall be announced beforehand, or listed in the church bulletin. Not all matters need be brought before the formal Session but can be handled in a less formal manner. Any elder may request a special meeting. A quorum shall be one-half of the elders serving in office, plus the moderator. In the case of a tie vote within the Session the vote of the moderator will be dropped to break the tie.
3. Responsibilities of individual elders: Elders are responsible for those duties delegated to them by the Session, and recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts and desires. Elders with such a charge will serve willingly, and without domineering in the discharge of their assigned duties (1 Peter 5:1-3).

Under Christ, the highest authority in the local church is the Session. The church acknowledges the variety of gifts and callings God gives to men, and recognizes that some of the elders, though equal in rank and authority, are especially gifted and called to preach the Word, and to teach right doctrine (1 Tim 5:17-18).

Our church therefore recognizes three distinct callings or offices related to the session for this local church. The first is called to govern, rule, and shepherd the church according to the Word, called by us a ruling elder (1 Tim 5:17; 1Thes 5:12-13; Heb 13:7,17; Rom 12:8; 1 Cor 12:28). A second shares these functions and is also called to a didactic ministry for teaching and instructing from the Word, called by us a teacher (1 Cor 12:28; James 3:1). A third also shares in governing and shepherding the church and is called to a pastoral ministry of the Word responsible for proclamation of the Word on the Lord's Day, as well as the general oversight of baptism and the Lord's Supper. This office is called by us a teaching elder, minister, or pastor (Eph 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:2-4). Each elder will have his calling and office acknowledged by the session.

In all meetings of the Session, each elder has one vote. In their capacity as a Session, they oversee all the affairs of the church, including the labors of teachers and ministers.

4. Financial provision of elders: Those elders (ordinarily those serving as ministers) whose assigned duties preclude them from providing for their families in the ordinary way must be provided for by the church through the tithes and gifts of the members (1 Timothy 5:17-18).
5. This constitution assumes, and the norms of biblical church order require, that a plurality of elders oversee this local church. Therefore if there no longer exists a plurality of elders in office, and this cannot in a timely way be supplied, the remaining elder (or the electors of the church, if there are no elders), shall seek the temporary oversight of the elders of a trusted sister church with similar doctrinal standards and practices. The purpose of such an arrangement is to provide care and leadership. When a plurality of resident elders is raised up the oversight arrangement described shall immediately cease.

B. Deacons

1. Responsibilities of deacons: Under the general oversight of the Session, the deacons will manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church body (Acts 6:2-4). Such responsibilities include: preparing and administering the annual budget, building maintenance, fellowship meals, and volunteer support.
2. Conduct of deacons' meetings: All usual business of the deacons will be conducted at the regular meeting of the deacons, or at a special meeting called for a particular purpose. The deacons will appoint one of their number to moderate the meetings of the deacons. The deacons will be prepared to provide a general report of their work and a financial report to the Session on a quarterly basis or as the Session requests, and they will give an annual report to the Session with proposals for the upcoming year.
3. Responsibilities of individual deacons: Individual deacons are responsible for those duties assigned to them by the deacons, and recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts and desires. There is no distinction of rank among the deacons.

C. Resignation of Elders or Deacons

If an elder or deacon desires to resign his office, or to take a leave of absence, he will present a letter expressing this desire and explaining his reasons to the Session. The elders will notify the men of the church of their receipt of the letter at the next heads of households meeting. If the desire of the elder or deacon concerned is unchanged by the next heads of households meeting, then the elders will read a statement to the assembled men accepting the resignation, or approving the leave of absence.

If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal turpitude, then the Session must exercise biblical discipline prior to, or in conjunction with, any consideration of the letter of resignation.

Should an elder or deacon no longer attend Trinity Church he should resign. He may be allowed a temporary sabbatical, should his absence be temporary, at the discretion of the other Session members. If he does not resign and is not attending services, nor on sabbatical, the Session shall automatically remove him from office after three (3) months of absence, or after absence at 5 regular Session meetings.

D. Biblical Counseling and Confidentiality

1. Biblical Counseling.
 - a. All Christians struggle with sin and the effect it has on our lives and our relationships (Romans 3:23; 7:7-25). Whenever a Christian is unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviors through private efforts, God commands that he should seek assistance from other members, and especially from the Session of Elders, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling and oversight (Romans 15:14; Galatians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2; Hebrews 10:24-25; 13:17; James 5:16). Therefore, this church encourages and enjoins its members to make confession of sin and to seek counsel from each other and especially from our pastoral counselors.
 - b. We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life; therefore, our counseling shall be based on Scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry.
 - c. Although some members of the church work in professional fields outside the church, when serving as pastoral or lay counselors within the church, they do not provide the same kind of professional advice and services that they do when they are hired in their professional capacities; therefore, members who have significant legal, financial, medical, or other technical questions should seek advice from independent professionals. The church's pastoral and lay counselors shall be available to cooperate with such advisors and help members to consider their advice in the light of relevant Scriptural principles.
2. Confidentiality.
 - a. The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (Matthew 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Proverbs 16:28; 26:20), invites confession (Proverbs 11:13; 28:13; James 5:16), and encourages people to seek needed counseling (Proverbs 20:19; Romans

- 15:14). Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the Gospel and the work of this church, all members are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others. In particular, our Session of Elders shall carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling, subject to the guidelines that follow. Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as is possible, there are times when it is biblically necessary to reveal certain information to others. In particular, the elders may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in certain circumstances such as, but not limited to, the following: (1) when the Session is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other officers in this church or, if the person attends another church, from the officers of that church (Proverbs 11:14; 13:10; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; Matthew 18:15-17), (2) when the person who disclosed the information or any other person is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Proverbs 24:11-12), or (3) when a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to institute disciplinary proceedings (Matthew 18:15-20 and Article VI on church discipline).
- b. Scripture commands that confidential information is to be shared with others only when a problem cannot be resolved through the efforts of a small group of people within the church (Matthew 18:15-17); therefore, except as provided in the guidelines listed above, the officers of this church may not disclose confidential information to anyone outside the church without the approval of the Session or the consent of the person who originally disclosed the information. The Session may approve such disclosure only when it finds that all internal efforts to resolve a problem have been exhausted (1 Corinthians 6:1-8) and the problem cannot be satisfactorily resolved without the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this church (Romans 13:1-5). This approval may be given for such things as, but not limited to, the giving of testimony in a court of law and the reporting of abuse.
 - c. The Session (or officers) may, but need not, provide counselees with written notice of these confidentiality provisions, but these provisions shall be in effect regardless of whether or not such notice is given.

Article IV: Selection of Elders and Deacons

A. Elders

1. This church is under the governing oversight of the Session, which must be composed of at least two elders. At least one of the elders should be a minister. Whenever the church is without an elder gifted as a minister the Session should seek to secure one without delay. All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (I Timothy 3:1-7, 11; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:2-4). The church shall proceed to call and elect a minister in the following manner: The Session shall first look within the church for a candidate whose life and character are known by the members. If none are found there, the Session shall look to other churches of like mind for one whose life and character are known by their members. If a candidate is not found the Session will expand the search to the broader reformed community. Once a candidate for minister is found the process below, for electing elders, is followed.
2. Elections for elders will be held from time to time as circumstances warrant. A man may be considered as a potential elder in several ways. He may aspire to the office himself, the elders may approach him, or the people of the church may suggest his name to the elders. Once the Session identifies a candidate, they will examine him with regard to his doctrine and manner of life. If the candidate has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's Statement of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the Session of it. All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:2-4).
3. When the Session unanimously determines that a man is biblically qualified, and is gifted and called to serve as an elder at Trinity Church, the Session will announce the candidate to the congregation and schedule an election at a heads of household meeting not less than 30 days after the announcement. Before the election, electors are encouraged to discuss with the session any shortcomings they perceive in the candidate's biblical qualifications.
4. Ballots will be distributed only to qualified, regularly attending electors. If a qualified elector is unable to attend the meeting, he may request that the Session provide him with an absentee ballot. The ballot will offer electors the option of voting either "yes" or "no." If the candidate is confirmed by a "yes" vote from not less than three-quarters of the electors (Philippians 2:1-4), the Session will ordain the new elder to the

ministry through the laying on of hands and prayer.

5. If a candidate for office is not elected, then an elder will meet with him within one week to discuss the election, and answer any questions the candidate might have. Once installed, the elder will serve for life, unless he resigns or is removed.
6. If, after assuming office, an elder comes to an understanding such that he has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's Statement of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the Session of it. The Session will then determine if any action is required regarding the office or membership of the elder.

B. Deacons

Elections for deacons will be held from time to time as circumstances warrant. A man may be considered as a potential deacon in several ways. He may aspire to the office himself, the elders or deacons may approach him, or the people of the church may suggest his name to the Session. The deacons will include the candidate in their work in order to prove his fitness for the office (1 Timothy 3:10). When the candidate has shown, in the unanimous judgment of the deacons, his fitness for office, the deacons will make a recommendation to the Session to place his name on the ballot. The Session will examine the candidate with regard to his suitability for the diaconate. If the candidate has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's Statement of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the Session of it.

All candidates for deacon must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:8- 13). A man may not be placed on the ballot without the unanimous consent of the current Session. Once on the ballot, the electors have the option of voting either "yes" or "no." If in the unanimous judgment of the Session, the candidate receives the clear and obvious support of the church as represented, the Session will ordain the new deacon to the ministry through the laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6). If a candidate for office is not elected, then an elder will meet with him within one week to discuss the election, and answer any questions the candidate might have. Once installed, the deacon will serve for life, unless he resigns, is removed, or is ordained as elder.

If, after assuming office, a deacon comes to an understanding such that he has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's Statement of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the Session of it. The Session will then determine if any action is required regarding the office or membership of the deacon.

C. Elections

Electors may petition the Session at any time to call a heads of households meeting for the purpose of electing additional elders, or deacons, in accordance with Article VII.B.

Article V. Removal of Elders and Deacons

A. Elders

If two or three witnesses believe an elder to be morally or doctrinally unfit for office, having gone to that elder first, and yet not having their concerns adequately resolved, they will present charges to the session (1 Tim. 5:19). If the session (excluding the accused, in such a case) unanimously decides that the question merits an investigation and/or trial, at their discretion they may inform the heads of households of the charges, announce the date(s) of the scheduled investigation and/or trial, and encourage the heads of households to attend. If the charges are unanimously sustained by the other elders, then the accused elder, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to correction, may be rebuked at the heads of households meeting (1 Tim. 5:20), or may be removed from the office of elder (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), or both.

B. Deacons

If two or three witnesses believe a deacon to be morally or doctrinally unfit for office, having gone to that deacon first, and yet not having their concerns adequately resolved, they will present charges to the session (1 Tim. 5:19). If the session unanimously decides that the question merits an investigation and/or trial, at their discretion they may inform the heads of households of the charges, announce the date(s) of the scheduled investigation and/or trial, and encourage the heads of households to attend. If the charges are unanimously sustained by the elders, then the accused deacon, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to correction, may be rebuked at the

heads of households meeting (1 Tim. 5:20), or may be removed from the office of deacon (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), or both.

C. Removal for non-Doctrinal or non-Moral Reasons

An elder may be removed from office, for non-doctrinal or non-moral reasons, by majority vote of the electors at a heads of households meeting called by the Session, and ratified by a majority vote of the other members of the Session. A heads of households meeting may also be called by petition of electors (Section VI. B). An elder may be removed should he not faithfully discharge his duties, no longer conform to the attributes of 1 Peter 5:2-3, or become mentally or physically unable to perform his duties, but not be guilty of chargeable sins or false doctrine.

Article VI. Discipline

A. The Nature of Discipline

Discipline is a censure or correction that is required of the church by Scripture. The purpose of church discipline is to prevent, restrain, or even to remove any evil that may threaten the Church and to promote and encourage that which is good and glorifying to God. Church discipline, in all its forms, is a necessary demarcation between the Church and the world; without it, we cannot distinguish between the two.

The ordinary course of discipline is informal. Members are encouraged to self-discipline, overlooking the failings of others in love (1 Pet. 4:8; Matt 5:23-24), and encouraging other members to covenant faithfulness (Matt. 18:15).

Formal church discipline is applied through the formal action and unanimous judgment of the elders. Except in cases of scandal requiring immediate action, the pattern of church discipline will generally include formal private admonishment by two or three (Matt. 18:16), formal public admonishment and suspension from the Lord's Supper (2 Thes. 3:14-15), and a formal trial which may result in excommunication (Matt. 18:17).

B. The Subjects of discipline:

1. Members. Those who meet the criteria of membership according to Article I, Section B of this constitution may be disciplined in the manner described in this constitution. Members who are children are subject to the discipline of the church; although the elders will seek to work with the parents as much as possible, taking into account the age and circumstances of the child.
2. Professing Christians under discipline by other churches: If another church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to Trinity Church, then the Session of Trinity Church will decide whether to honor the discipline of the other church after due consultation with the person concerned and after appropriate information is obtained from the disciplining church.
3. Non-members: Those who regularly attend and are not members will be subject to the exhortations and admonitions of this Church body.

C. The Process of discipline:

The elders shall establish the specific procedures for all formal discipline on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures should include a clear and timely warning of the individual that he is in the process of formal discipline, two or three visits or communications involving two or three witnesses, and clear records and/or minutes of the entire proceedings kept by the elders.

When the elders determine that a trial is necessary, they will establish the specific procedures for each trial on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures should include informing the accused in writing of the specific charges, the time, place, and date of the trial, and ample time for the accused to prepare a defense.

The heads of households meeting will be informed of the trial at the first opportunity. At the trial, one of the elders will present a solemn charge from the Scriptures on the responsibilities of those present, the evidence against the accused will be presented, and the accused will have time to make a reasonable defense, including the right to question any witnesses.

At a separate meeting of the elders, a vote will be taken on each of the charges. The elders will declare their verdict to the congregation on an appointed Lord's Day after the worship service and following an appropriate exhortation. The accused will be given a written copy of the verdict.

The elders will establish an official file containing all the records pertaining to the trial, including all pertinent correspondence, transcripts, and minutes. If he requests it, the accused will be given one copy of this file at the expense of the church. Any appeals to the presbytery will be conducted in accordance with the Constitution of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches.

Excommunication will end when, in the unanimous opinion of the elders, the one under discipline has repented. A confession of this repentance will be read to the congregation on the Lord's Day, prior to the worship service and the elders shall formally announce the end of the discipline and restoration of fellowship.

C. Complaints

A complaint is a written representation made for a serious grievance other than those that necessitate an accusation and judicial trial. Any member of the church in good standing shall have the right of complaint, provided that the individual attempts discussion and gives due notice to the party against whom the complaint is made. Complaints shall go to the Session, before being referred to any federation, alliance, or denominational entity.

Article VII. Heads of Households meetings

A. Annual Meetings

The Session shall call a heads of households meeting annually, to be held in January or February, for the purpose of reviewing the past year's progress, and the presentation of the next year's budget and ministries.

B. Special Meetings

Special heads of households meetings shall be called by the Session at any time, or whenever 25% of the electors presently attending shall request such a meeting. A meeting shall be held within 4 weeks of receipt of a valid petition requesting it and presented to the Session.

C. Meeting Content

No business shall be voted on at heads of households meetings except that which was stated in the call. No business shall be conducted unless a quorum is present. A two (2) week notice for all meetings shall be given in the church bulletin and/or announced at the morning service(s).

The projected expenditures, including provision for ministers and their families, purchase or sale of real estate, major construction projects, and similar sales or purchases, and denomination, federation, or alliance affiliation or disaffiliation, shall be approved at a heads of households meeting. For these items a two-thirds majority vote is required.

The content of heads of households meetings is not restricted to the above. Other, even regularly scheduled, heads of households meetings may be called for teaching and training the men in their biblical role as the head of a household.

D. Quorum

A quorum shall consist of at least 50% of the regularly attending electors. We understand that there are those with jobs that preclude consistent attendance of weekly services; the eligibility of such members will be considered on an individual basis. The elders will encourage and seek ways to aid the individual to seek work that will allow regular attendance.

Article VIII. Incorporation

- A. As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Trinity Church is not constituted or incorporated by anyone other than

the Lord Jesus Christ, the only head of the church.

- B. Trinity Church is constituted as a free church and maintains its status as a free church as a matter of conscience.

Article IX. Amendments

The Statement of Faith and Constitution may be amended at any time through unanimous consent of the Session, when the following conditions have first been fulfilled.

1. A written copy of the proposed change is distributed to the congregation at the morning service at least two (2) Sundays prior to the heads of households meeting.
2. There is a reading of the proposed change and consultation with the electors of the church at a heads of households meeting and it (the proposed change) is ratified by a two-thirds vote at said meeting.

Appendix 1: Statement of Faith

Our statement of faith is comprised of the following documents, all subordinate to the Scriptures, and of which we are in essential agreement: the Three Forms of Unity, which are the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism. Together with the historic church, we confess the following: The Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed Constantinople, and the Definition of Chalcedon.

Appendix 2: The Constitution of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC)

In accordance with Article III, Section I., of the constitution of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC), Trinity Church accepts the CREC constitution as part of its constitution and submits to the authority and standards of the CREC.

Appendix 3: Formation of a New Church

In accordance with the CREC constitution and Book of Procedures (BOP Article IV.3.a), the mother church forms the new mission church by approving the new church's constitution and appointing a session pro tempore, under which members may be received and officers elected. This appendix outlines the procedure for the initial formation of Trinity Church, after which these procedures become obsolete.

- A. The session of the mother church (Christ Covenant Church of Chicago) has approved the existing constitution provisionally, with the intention of serving Trinity Church and its elder(s) by working to present revisions which better fit the particular needs and help shape the unique vision of this new church within the first year.
- B. The session of the mother church, serving as the session pro tempore, will appoint one or more of its members to preside over a meeting to administer membership vows to initial members. A clerk will record names of new member households.
- C. At the same meeting, the session pro tempore will present an elder candidate unanimously nominated according to this constitution (Article IV.A.3), and hold an election for the nominated elder candidate by paper ballot. For the purpose of church formation, the 30-day-notice will be waived.
- D. Electors will be the new members qualified as described in the constitution above (Article I.D.1), and recorded by the clerk. For those joining Trinity Church at its first meeting, or within two Sundays after the first worship service, the six month membership requirement for all future voting shall be waived. Each qualified elector will vote either "yes" or "no". If the candidate is confirmed by a "yes" vote from not less than three-quarters of the electors, the newly elected elder will become a member of the session pro tempore and will be commissioned to function as the pastor of the new church until he is formally ordained or installed by the laying on of hands and prayer.

This constitution was adopted by Trinity Church on May 26, 2024.