

Constitution
of
Trinity Reformed Baptist Church
of Terre Haute, IN

Adopted: May 1st, 2022

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ARTICLE I: PREAMBLE

I. We, the members of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, do declare and establish this Constitution for the preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and so that this body may be governed in a Scriptural and orderly manner. This Constitution will preserve the liberties and state the responsibilities of each individual member of this church, including its officers. As members of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church we voluntarily and solemnly submit ourselves to the following articles of this Constitution.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

I. This church exists by the grace of God and for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose of all its activities. We will seek to glorify the triune God of Scripture (Ephesians 3:15-21) by enjoying Him and promoting His worship (John 4:23,24; 1 Cor. 3:16,17; 1 Pet. 2:5), by edifying and equipping the saints (1 Cor. 12:27,28; 14:12,26; Eph. 4:11-16), and by engaging the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ both locally and worldwide (Mat. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; Acts 13 & 14) as the faithful bride of Christ, which is His church.

II. Whenever possible we will seek to both plant and strengthen other churches by promoting Biblical faithfulness to the Word of God, by encouraging purity in all of their assemblies in the name of Christ (Acts 15:36,41; Acts 16:5; Jude 3), and by seeking to minister relief to the needy, especially among the saints (Rom. 15:26,27; Gal. 2:10; Gal. 6:10).

ARTICLE III: STATEMENT OF FAITH

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

I. The Holy Scriptures are the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. These Scriptures do expressly command and assume that the Church, in its local and visible expression, will define and confess what the Bible teaches. Therefore, we fully subscribe to the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of (1677/89) as a true and accurate expression of that system of doctrine taught in the Bible. This historic Confession is an excellent summary of the fundamental truths of God's Word and serves us as an aid in controversy, a means of growing together in grace, an instrument of edification and instruction, and a basis for church unity and formal association with other churches. This Confession provides every member with a compact systematic theology, and by means of the scriptural proofs, each one can be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him (1 Peter 3:15).

ARTICLE IV: CHURCH COVENANT

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

I. God has graciously entered into a New Covenant with His people (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:40; Heb.8:7-13; 10:16,17; 13:20,21) through the work of Jesus Christ (Heb 8:6), whose obedience and blood infallibly secure all of its benefits for them (Mat. 26:26-28; Heb. 13:20-21). By making us members of the one body of Christ (Rom. 12:4,5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:25), the New Covenant lays upon us responsibilities, not only to God, but also to each other. Trinity Reformed Baptist Church exists on the basis of the New Covenant as a local expression of the power and grace of God and we joyfully submit to the New Covenant obligations required of us, those being that we love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. By the grace of that Covenant, we commit ourselves to the following obligations:

II. We commit to seek to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves and to manifest that in our worship, walk and witness.

SECTION 2: COMMITMENT TO LOVE GOD AND OTHERS

I. Our Commitment to Love God and Others in our Worship

We commit to *worship* God exclusively, Scripturally, and regularly.

- Exclusively: We agree to worship only the one true and living God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), who has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures, only through the mediation of His Son, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Scripturally: We commit ourselves to exalting the matchless reputation of God through worship that is in accordance with Biblical teaching. The essential elements of this worship are the reading of Scripture, preaching and teaching the Bible, reverent observance of the sacraments, participation in common prayer, and singing to God's glory.

- Regularly: We will worship God regularly, faithfully observing that public and corporate worship which He commands on the Lord's Day, while also being diligent to attend all the stated services of the church, except when legitimately hindered.

II. Our Commitment to Love God and Others in our Walk

We commit to *walk* before God in Biblical holiness of heart and life, through honest communication, mutual accountability, and responsible stewardship. We recognize the seriousness of taking upon ourselves the name of the one true God in our baptism and church membership. Therefore we honor God in our profession of faith by ever seeking a closer walk with Him through the means of grace¹ which He has provided in Christ, which include not only our faithful attendance at public worship, but also maintaining private devotions (Bible study and prayer), family worship, and loving one another in community. We commit to serving and strengthening one another through the Word of God spoken and lived out, bearing each other's burdens, walking in step with the Spirit, and loving accountability.

III. Our Commitment to Love God and Others in our Witness

We commit to obeying the "Great Commission" through our *witness* of the saving grace of Jesus Christ to the world. We do this through the example of our worship and walk, and through the proclamation of this saving grace to our unsaved neighbors while also seeking their temporal well-being. We engage moreover to promote the spread of the gospel of Christ worldwide by our prayers, finances, and whatever other Scriptural means are available to us.

Furthermore, we will love all of our Christian neighbors, realizing that all true brothers and sisters in Christ are part of the same household of faith (Galatians 6:10). While seeking to faithfully hold to what we are convinced is taught in Holy Scripture, we will avoid all unholy sectarianism, seeking as far as possible to pursue and maintain the highest degree of friendship and fellowship, while also promoting the temporal and spiritual welfare of all of the family of God.

IV. Our Commitment to Persevere

We humbly and joyfully enter into this Covenant while acknowledging our bent toward sin in Adam, yet confident of the gracious work of Christ in us by His Spirit to transform us, which is well-pleasing in His sight. We enter this Covenant with a genuine desire to please our God by keeping it to the best of our God-given ability.

¹ The term "means of grace" refers to God's ordinary methods of sanctifying and blessing His church. God's gracious ordinary means are God's Word (both read and proclaimed), the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, fellowship with God's people, and prayer."

ARTICLE V: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1: GENERAL STATEMENT

I. Trinity Reformed Baptist Church is an autonomous, congregational, elder-led baptist² church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains and reserves the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church, deciding who shall be members of this church, and the conditions of such membership.

SECTION 2: THE WARRANT FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

I. A genuine Christian's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ is inseparable from his commitment to His Word and His people. This commitment ordinarily requires a formal, open, voluntary, solemn and enduring commitment to membership in a local church. The following are some of the Biblical instructions and requirements for the existence of the local church that Christ ordained for His own glory and worship, and also for the spiritual benefit of His people, which shows the warrant for every true Christian to seek membership therein:

A. The New Testament presents the local church as a distinct and defined group of individuals covenanted together to worship God and carry out the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ. The local church is composed of individuals who may be counted (Acts 2:41,42; Acts 4:4), added to (Acts 2:47; 5:14), and even subtracted from membership (Mat 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:12,13; 2 Cor. 2:6).

B. Each local church of Christ is called upon to select leaders and representatives from among its members (Acts 6:1-6; Acts 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19,23), thus making it a formal organization with recognized officers (Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23).

C. Fulfillment of the great commission involves church membership. In this commission there is an inseparable connection between making disciples,

² By the term "baptist" we mean that we affirm the New Testament ordinance of baptism for professing believers only, understanding that Jesus Christ ordained baptism to be unto the party baptized, a sign of remission of sins and fellowship with Him, in his death and resurrection. Only those who have been united to Christ in faith are to receive the external picture of that salvation through immersion in water.

baptizing them, and then teaching them all things that Christ has commanded. It is clear from the Scriptures that the apostles implemented this commission by gathering baptized disciples into local churches where they were taught all the things that Christ had commanded (Acts 2:38-42; 1 Cor. 4:1-7; Titus 1:9).

D. The whole of the New Testament presents a picture of disciples of Christ worshiping and serving Him in connection with some local church. We believe this is what Christ intends for all of His disciples to the end of the age.

SECTION 3: RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH MEMBERS

I. Trinity Reformed Baptist Church intends that its membership be composed exclusively of those who have been united to Christ through faith and therefore requires its members be those that credibly profess to believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, having obeyed Him in the ordinance of believer's baptism, and who commit to be faithful in all the duties essential to the Christian life. This includes a commitment to attend regularly the stated services of this church unless providentially hindered, to submit cheerfully to the eldership of the church (Hebrews 13:17), to give cheerfully to its support and its causes as God has prospered them, and to participate in its organized work and make available to the church such talents and abilities with which God has endowed them.

SECTION 4: APPLICATION PROCEDURE

I. Any person may apply to be a candidate for membership in Trinity Reformed Baptist Church. We understand the Scriptural priority of serving the Lord in a local church and therefore welcome any and all persons who are Biblically qualified to join with us. However, we also recognize the vital importance of keeping the Lord's church sound in doctrine and pure in testimony, and therefore we desire all potential members to understand and meet those Biblical qualifications. Members are to be received only upon the recommendation of the elder(s) and by the consent of the church.

II. The method of receiving members into Trinity Reformed Baptist Church will be according to the following steps:

Step 1: An initial interview with the elder(s) of the church and the supporting nomination of the elder(s) to the whole church body.

This is required to ascertain by the applicant's testimony, with as much certainty as possible, that the proposed member knows the way of salvation and has a personal saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is necessary because we believe that church membership is for true believers only. If applicants are or have been members of other congregations, the elders will attempt to determine their standing in those assemblies and the reasons for their departure.

This is required to make sure that the proposed member understands and is in agreement with the truths we confess, and is in general and substantial agreement with the truths that we teach. It is not expected that every new member (especially a recent convert) understand all the doctrines we teach, but there must be a general soundness in faith and a humble willingness to learn God's truth, together with a determination not to sow any discord in the church with regard to any doctrinal matters in which the prospective member might be in disagreement with the church.

This is required to make sure that the proposed member understands the responsibility and what is expected of members of the church.

Step 2: Following the the eldership interview process and required elder nomination, the membership candidate will be presented before the church for formal membership. This process will include the following:

- A. A formal announcement to the church of the desire of the candidate to become a member.
- B. The prospective member will give his testimony before the church and a written copy of the member's testimony will be made available to the members of the church.
- C. The allowance of a period of not less than one week for the members to review

the testimony, and voice any concerns to the elder(s).

Step 3: After time has been allotted for the accomplishment of Step 2, the members will vote on the reception of the candidate into membership. A two-thirds (67%) vote of those members present and voting shall be required for acceptance into church membership.

Step 4: If the candidate is accepted by the church as a member, the candidate will be officially received into membership in a public worship service. If the candidate has not yet been baptized, baptism will be administered prior to receiving him/her into membership. During the public worship service, an elder will lead the candidate and the congregation in the following oath:

III. Questions to the Candidate:

1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His wrath, and without hope except in His sovereign mercy?
2. Do you repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel?
3. Will you endeavor, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live according to your identity as a follower of Christ?
4. Do you commit to walk together with God's people in Christian love through the power of the Holy Spirit?
5. Will you support Trinity Reformed Baptist Church in its worship, work, and witness?
6. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, and will you endeavor to maintain its purity and peace?

IV. Question to the Congregation:

1. Do you as a congregation receive this brother and/or sister into our fellowship and commit to serve, encourage, watch over, and pray for them as fellow members of the body of Christ?

SECTION 5: TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

I. As is the case with receiving members, so the termination of church membership must be governed by Biblical principles. Accordingly, membership in Trinity Reformed Baptist Church will be terminated in one of the following four ways:

- A. Death: When members of the fellowship are removed from the visible church by death, the elders must remove their names from the membership roll.
- B. Transfer of membership: Since the New Testament calls for all Christians to be members of true local churches, and it is spiritually dangerous to not be under the teaching of Scripture and accountability through a local body, any person leaving the membership of this church should seek to submit to and join a local, faithful, body of Christ.

Those wishing to transfer membership to another true church for the reasons of relocation or doctrinal convictions may request a letter of recommendation from the elders to their new assembly. As long as the member is in good standing with this fellowship, is not in the process of church discipline, and the church where they are attending is in basic agreement with the central truths of the faith, the elders may grant their approval of the transfer. Their removal from the membership roll and their requirements to fulfill their new church covenant obligations will go into effect after they have joined in membership with the receiving church.

If, however, members are currently subject to church discipline, even if the church discipline steps outlined in Article VI are not fully completed, or they request transference to a church not adhering to the central truths of the faith, the elders must not give consent for the transfer. In such cases, out of love for the departing member, the elders will admonish and warn them concerning their spiritual state, and, where appropriate, communicate with the church of intended membership.

We realize, especially in situations of relocation, that this process may sometimes require a transitional period, and the elders will take such things into account when dealing with a member's transfer of membership. It will be the duty of the elders to handle transfer of membership in a way that accords with Scriptural principles.

C. Exclusion, *not under discipline*: In some cases, a person's membership may need to be terminated for reasons, which, in the judgment of the church, may not warrant discipline. Such cases, for example, may include a member seeking to be relieved from his church covenant obligations for reasons that the church or its elders may deem satisfactory, or the relocation of a member who no longer remains in contact with the church. The church can exclude such persons from its membership roll without the exercise of church discipline. Such instances require the nomination of the elders and a 50% approval of the church. The elders shall announce to the congregation that such persons have been dismissed from this membership and the details of their exclusion shall be kept in the church records. The church shall seek to communicate to the departing members where possible that they are relieved of their covenant church obligations not under discipline. Any person who has been excluded from membership may be restored by nomination of all the elders and a majority vote of this church upon his/her request.

D. Exclusion *under church discipline*: According to the Holy Scriptures, a church must exclude from its membership any person who persists in holding or teaching serious doctrinal heresies, or persists in conduct which is either publicly scandalous or blatantly inconsistent with his or her Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of the church.³ (Mat. 18:15ff.; 1 Cor. 5:1ff.; Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10,11)

³ This procedure is explained in Article VI of this Constitution.

ARTICLE VI: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

SECTION 1: FORMATIVE DISCIPLINE

I. Formative discipline functions positively to promote and maintain the conditions of learning necessary for making obedient disciples in the body of Christ. Formative discipline involves teaching truth in such a way that it stimulates continual growth in Christ in the lives of God's people. This is the formal responsibility of the church's leadership (Eph 4:11-12) and the informal responsibility of all its members. (Eph. 4:12-16; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; 1 Thess. 5:12-15; Heb. 3:12-14; 10:24-25, Prov. 3:12) Each one is responsible in the life of the church to exercise his/her spiritual gifts, encourage, admonish, teach and serve the other members so that the church body may grow as it builds itself up in love to become more like Christ. (Eph. 4:15-16; Colossians 3:12-17; Galatians 5:6, 13-16)

SECTION 2: CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE

I. Corrective discipline always aims for the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the congregation, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offenders. Corrective discipline is necessary because of conduct or doctrine contrary to Biblical requirements. Corrective discipline must occur when members refuse to settle differences Biblically (Matthew 18:15-35), and/or when public and scandalous sins occur (I Corinthians 5:1-13), and/or heretical beliefs appear in the congregation (I Timothy 1:18-20), and/or divisive actions persist among members (Titus 3:9-11).

II. The method of corrective discipline will be according to the following steps:

Step 1: One to One Attempt to Restore

Any member of this church, having factual knowledge of an erring member's heresy, misconduct, or refusal to be reconciled must correct such a person in private and seek his or her restoration (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1-2). However, members must not become busy bodies seeking such confrontations.

Step 2: One or Two Witnesses Attempt to Restore

If, after repeated attempts, the erring member refuses to heed such warnings, then

the warning member shall return, privately, with one or two witnesses. These witnesses, after self-examination and prayer, shall adjudicate the matter and seek to reconcile the parties and/or to restore the erring member (Matthew 18:16, 19-20).

Step 3: Members Attempt to Restore

First Report to the Elders: If the witnesses determine that the erring member refuses to heed such warnings, they shall report the matter to the Elders. This report is necessary if the church is to conduct its ministry in a decent and organized manner during the process. God has called the elders, not the general membership, to keep watch over the flock. These men will give an account to God for their stewardship of the church (Hebrews 13:17). For this reason, their involvement at this point in the process is absolutely necessary. At this stage, the witnesses along with the elders, after self-examination and prayer, shall adjudicate the matter and seek to reconcile the parties and/or to restore the erring member (Matthew 18:16, 19-20).

Next Report to the Membership: If the witnesses and the elders determine that the erring member refuses to heed such warnings, they shall report the matter (only the necessary information) to the entire fellowship. At this stage, the witnesses along with the elders and the entire congregation, after self-examination and prayer, shall adjudicate the matter and seek to reconcile the parties and/or to restore the erring believer (Matthew 18:16, 19-20; Galatians 6:1-5). At this point in the process, the members of the congregation may associate with the erring brother or sister only to warn him/her of his/her error. During this sobering time, the erring member is not welcome to participate in the Lord's table and the privileges of membership, according to the guidelines of Scripture (Matt 18:17; I Cor 5:9-11; II Thess 3:6, 14-15). A member may, at times due to the public and scandalous nature of his/her sin, be reported by the elders to the congregation, at this level of discipline without pursuing the informal and private steps (I Corinthians 5:1-13). This will occur only if the elders have found it impossible to implement the informal and private procedure first. Only the elders are authorized to make such a report.

SECTION 3: EXCLUSION UNDER CHURCH DISCIPLINE

I. Failure to Heed Warnings: If, after members of the congregation have attempted to retain the erring member, he/she still refuses to repent, he/she shall be put out of

the church, “turned over to Satan”, and treated as an unbeliever, being publicly dismissed from the church. (Matthew 18:17-18; I Corinthians 5:4-11, 13; I Timothy 1:18-20).

II. This dismissal will occur after following the above steps of Article VI, the nomination of the elder(s), and a 50% approval of the church members present at a formal meeting of the members.

III. At this time, the elders shall remove the excluded member from the church roll and instruct the congregation to treat the resigning member according to the commands in Matthew 18:17 and I Corinthians 5:4-11.

SECTION 4: RESTORATION OF THE ERRING MEMBER

I. Informal and Private Level of Discipline: If the erring member repents at the informal and private level of discipline (e.g., one-to-one and witness stage), then repentance, confession and restoration shall be private (Matthew 18:15-16; Luke 17:3-4; Ephesians 4: 32; Colossians 3:13).

II. Formal and Public Level of Discipline: If the discipline proceeds to the formal level of public disclosure to the congregation, then, the repentance, confession, and restoration must also be formal and publically before the congregation (II Corinthians 2:5- 11).

III. Responsibility of Membership to Forgive: At whatever level restoration occurs, members are called to forgive the offender upon his or her confession and repentance (Luke 17:3-4; Ephesians 4:32; II Corinthians 2:5-11).

IV. Receiving Back into Membership: If, after a member is excluded, he/she repents and seeks restoration to Trinity Reformed Baptist Church as a member, he/she shall follow in full the steps of proposed members outlined in Article V of this constitution.

ARTICLE VII: CHURCH OFFICERS

SECTION 1: CHRIST AS HEAD OF THE CHURCH

I. Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church (Col. 1:18). He has ordained that individual churches be governed by Himself through officers whom He appoints, who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. These officers govern with due respect to the rights and liberties of the whole church set forth in the Scriptures (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5:1-13; Acts 6:1-7; 2 Cor. 2:6). Christ has ordained that local churches be led by elders and served by deacons. Beside the offices of elder and deacon, the Scriptures acknowledge no other offices that continue in the church today (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13).

SECTION 2: GENERAL PREREQUISITES

I. All officers of this church must be members of this church.

II. Any individual set apart to one of these offices must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the truths we teach and confess. If he should at any time move from this agreement, he is under immediate spiritual and moral obligation to make that fact known to the elders privately.

III. We affirm the Scriptural truth that God has made all people, male and female, in His image and there is therefore no distinction of value and worth before God. In God's grace, He has given to all men and women in His church valuable gifts which are for the mutual edification and encouragement of the body and He calls everyone to use these gifts to serve the Lord for His glory (Rom. 16:1-6; Phil. 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:11). However, in God's wise design He has only called men to hold either the office of deacon or elder in the church. Therefore women shall not be nominated, elected, or ordained to either of these offices in the church (1 Cor. 14:33b-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:1-7).

SECTION 3: ELDERS

I. Those who have been called and equipped by God to lead, shepherd, and teach in

the church are identified as elders, pastors, or overseers. These three names designate one and the same office in a New Testament church (Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11-12; Titus 1:5, 7).

II. Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence to God's people, the church, the personal, domestic and ministerial qualifications set forth in the Scriptures, such as 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

III. Because the authority of the elders of the church is human authority exercised in the house of God, it has both high prerogatives and important limitations. These prerogatives and limitations detail the overseer, pastoral, and shepherding natures of the office of elder.

- A. The authority of the elders is a divinely-delegated authority. Thus, elders are answerable to God for the exercise of this authority (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). They are, therefore, obligated to discharge all the duties specified in the Scriptures in such passages as Acts 20:17-35, 1 Peter 5:1-4 and Hebrews 13:17.
- B. The authority of the elders is limited to the sphere of the local church. They may not require consequences for sin beyond those of church discipline, may not invade the spheres of other ordained human authorities (husbands, fathers, civil rulers and employers), and may not command God's people regarding matters not specified in Scripture (Matt. 22:21; Luke 12:13-14). They must, however, order the house of God by the application of His Word (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:3a; Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-6:9; I Cor. 7:25-28; 35-40).
- C. The authority of the elders bears the weight of leading through shepherding the flock of God among them (1 Peter 5:2). Therefore, elders must seek to lead God's people chiefly through the ministry of God's word. This is to see the mutual sanctification of God's people by God's Spirit (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17; Acts 6:4).
- D. The authority of the elders does not include the right to make all decisions unilaterally. Decisions having to do with public corrective discipline, recognition or removal of officers, or reception or exclusion of church members require the

consent of the local church as outlined in Articles V-VII (Acts 6:2-6; 9:26; 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 13; 2 Cor. 2:6). Additionally, it is fitting that major financial decisions such as the purchase or sale of property must also be approved by the consent of the church. Nevertheless, the elders must provide definitive leadership to the church in the making of such decisions.

- E. The authority of elders is conditioned by the fact that they are themselves members of the local church. While elders are shepherds over the flock, they are also members of the flock. Therefore, each individual elder is entitled to the same privileges, is obligated by the same responsibilities, and is subject to the same discipline as are all other members of the church.⁴ Thus, each individual elder is both under the oversight of his fellow elders and accountable to the church as a whole (Matt. 18:17; 23:9; 26:31; Gal. 2:11; 3 John 1,9-10).
- F. The authority of every elder (overseer or pastor) is the same. Thus, every elder has equal authority in the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder, this diversity must never undermine real parity among the elders (Acts 20:28; Gal. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:17).
- G. The authority of the elders is a very real authority. When it is Biblically exercised, God's people are required to submit to this authority (Heb 13:17).

IV. The primary duty of elders is to shepherd the flock of God through preaching and teaching which is the personal and public ministry of the Word. This should always be done in grace and truth. (1 Peter 5:2, 2 Timothy 4:1-2, Acts 6:2)

IV. One crucial aspect of the duties of elders is overseeing the flock of God. Fulfillment of this duty shall include, when possible, regular pastoral visits with each member of the church (Acts 20:28).

V. Another crucial aspect of the duties of elders is exercising leadership with regard to the meetings and worship of the church. The elders shall appoint such meetings as they believe good for the spiritual health of the church and assure that they are conducted to the glory of God and according to the provisions of His Word.

⁴ See Article V, Section 3 on member responsibilities and Article VI on church discipline.

VI. While there may be elders who are not financially supported by the church, 1 Timothy 5:17 describes that the elders who rule well, and especially those who labor in the Word and doctrine, will, when possible, be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of another vocation. This will allow for his dedication of his gifts and ability for the flourishing of the church.

VII. A plurality of elders is the New Testament norm for every church and this church should endeavor to maintain this plurality where God has provided faithful qualified men whom He has called (Acts 20:17). However, the New Testament does not specify the number of elders each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an elder's term of office. If the church through the providence of God comes to have no elders, then the deacons shall assume leadership as the church waits upon the Lord to provide elders. If the church also has no deacons, then the church shall choose two men of good reputation to act as leaders while the church waits upon the Lord to provide biblically qualified elders and/or deacons. These leaders shall seek the counsel and guidance of a church of like faith and practice that has an established eldership. These leaders shall also guide the church in selecting a pulpit committee⁵ to search for a qualified man to pastor the church.

IV. No term of office shall be fixed for elders.

SECTION 4: DEACONS

I. Deacons are primarily responsible for administering the ministries of mercy and benevolence, along with other practical matters in the church. Such other practical matters may include the management of various business affairs, the facilitation of particular ministries within the church, and the maintenance and improvement of the church's facilities or property. In this way the deacons assist the elders in those practical aspects of ministry, which would otherwise distract them from their priorities of prayer, the ministry of the Word, and shepherding.

II. As God has gifted all men differently, deacons shall be organized according to the gifts of the Spirit and for the welfare of the church and its outreach ministry,

⁵ See Article VII, Section 5.B.1.

however, deacons must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with, and in subjection to, the elders.

III. The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall set apart according to its need men who desire to serve the Lord in the office of deacon and evidence the Scriptural qualifications for that office (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

IV. No term of office shall be fixed for deacons.

SECTION 5: APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

I. *General Statement:* The appointment of elders and deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. However, He has ordained that they be formally recognized by the consent of the particular church they serve. The ordination of elders and the installation of deacons will be accompanied by the laying on of hands by the eldership (1 Tim 4:14). This is an expression of approval for which the elders are responsible (1 Tim 5:22). Therefore, each officer must have the approval, not only of the church as a whole, but also of the eldership in particular. The Lord's appointment of an individual to either of these offices is recognized by means of that individual's possession of those graces and gifts required by Scripture for the particular office, and his own conviction that the Lord is calling him to minister in that office. The recognition of officers is a matter of such importance that it should never proceed without much prayerful waiting upon God, careful consideration of the relevant passages of Scripture, and thorough evaluation of those persons being considered. Each member of the church has a responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding these matters.

II. *Procedure of Appointment:* The recognition of those whom the Lord has appointed to bear office in this church is carried out in 3 steps: nomination, election and ordination or installation.

A. *Nomination:* The members of the church are encouraged to express to the elders (privately) their views concerning those whom Christ may be gifting for office in the church. The elders will seriously consider the wisdom God gives to His church. However, since it is the elders' responsibility to lead the church,

nominations to office are to be made by the eldership. If at any time the church is without an elder, a pulpit committee shall be elected by the church at any regular or specially called congregational meeting. The committee shall seek out a Scripturally qualified man, and then nominate him to the church. The church shall then prayerfully consider him for the office of elder or deacon. When possible, the church should look within its own membership to see if Christ is actually equipping someone for the office from within the church.

B. Election: At a properly called meeting of the church, the names of all nominees shall be separately discussed. The Scriptural qualifications shall be read and expounded, and the nominee's qualifications openly discussed in the fear of God and with due respect for the reputation of the nominee. The nominee being discussed should not be present. The church should seek unanimity concerning each nominee, but where unanimity is not realized, a vote of three-fourths (75%) of those ballots cast by a minimum of 50% of possible voting members present shall be required for election.

C. Ordination: Following the election of an officer there shall be a portion of a worship service set aside at which time the officer-elect shall be ordained and/or installed into office by the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Before the laying on of the hands, an elder will lead the officer-elect in the following oath:

D. Questions for Elders:

1. Do you believe the Scriptures as written in the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and do you accept them as the only inspired, inerrant, and sufficient rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience?
2. Have you personally adopted and will you cheerfully submit to and defend the Statements of Faith of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church?
3. Do you accept the office of elder readily, and do you promise to perform its duties of caring for the flock of God in the fear of Jesus' Name?

E. Question for Deacons:

1. Do you believe the Scriptures as written in the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and do you accept them as the only inspired, inerrant, and sufficient rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience?

2. Have you personally adopted and will you cheerfully submit to and defend the Statements of Faith of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church?
 3. Do you accept the office of deacon, and do you promise to care for the poor and needy and to manage the practical affairs of this church in the fear of Jesus' Name?
- F. This solemn act should always be accompanied by the special prayers of the church. (Acts 13:1-3) The laying on of the elders' hands shall signify their approval of an officer-elect.

SECTION 6: REMOVAL OF OFFICERS

- I. If an officer falls into heresy or some other sin by which they are no longer able to meet the qualifications of I Timothy 3, Titus 1, and I Peter 5 he may be removed from his office by the church following the principles of 1 Timothy 5:19-20.
- II. If two or three witnesses have personal factual knowledge (not merely hearsay) regarding an elder's scandalous sin or false teaching, they must bring the matter to the eldership. If, after the elders have thoroughly investigated the matter, they verify the accusation, the elders shall disclose these facts publicly and rebuke the erring elder before the entire congregation. If the church has only one elder the witnesses shall bring the matter to the deacons for review. If the church also has no deacons, the witnesses should address the matter intently with a few faithful men in the congregation. If the false teaching or sin of the elder is shown to be clear, the witnesses should bring the matter before the church at the next formal church meeting.
- III. In such cases an elder may be subject to reevaluation either by a request from a fellow elder or upon a petition of 5 members or 10% of the members of the congregation, whichever is greater. If an elder is required to be reevaluated he will be immediately removed from his active duties until his reevaluation is complete. During this time, the church must pray intently until the matter can be discussed and voted upon at the next formal meeting of the church. A three-fourths (75%) of those ballots cast shall be required for the elder to be retained in the office.

IV. The removal of an elder from office does not remove him from membership in the church. All church members must continue to love, encourage, and admonish one another as fellow children of God. As a fellow member of the church, the removed elder is under the oversight of his elders and is subject to the same discipline as outlined in Article VI.

V. An elder may desire to resign from the eldership due to reasons other than those that would disqualify him. These reasons may include needed rest from oversight responsibilities, a time to reevaluate his personal life, a family illness, etc. If an elder does desire to resign, he shall first discuss the matter with the eldership, and then it shall be announced by the eldership to the church. While all men should strive to have the moral qualifications of officers outlined in 1 Timothy, the church is aware that all are not called to serve in that capacity, therefore if an elder resigns he should still be loved and treated as a brother in Christ and a member of the church. If the resigning elder desires to be reinstated at a later date, he shall be reevaluated according to the outline in Article VII, Section 5 to examine if God is calling him to serve again in this local church.

ARTICLE VIII: CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

SECTION 1: GENERAL STATEMENT

I. The Biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons. In order to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” our church also recognizes the administrative positions under this Constitution of trustee, treasurer, and clerk. These positions are to be filled from among the membership of the church and exist in submission to and under the leadership of the elders. Appointment to one of these positions shall occur at the annual December business meeting but may occur at other times if deemed expedient.

SECTION 2: CHURCH FINANCES

I. The work of this church is financially dependent upon the voluntary gifts of God's people. All property of this church is to be held for the use and benefit of those who are members thereof. We believe that each and every local church of Christ is autonomous under the headship of Jesus Christ, and shall choose for itself what shall be done with its own property and finances. We agree together to seek Divine wisdom in the usage of the resources God has given us, for His glory, for the good of His church, and for the promotion of His truth, according to the Holy Scriptures. Should any disagreements arise regarding the use of these resources, such disputes shall be settled by majority vote of the members of this church.

SECTION 3: CHURCH BUDGET

I. Before the December congregational meeting, the elders and deacons will present an estimate of the needs of the several divisions of the work in a prepared budget, detailing the proposed expenditures for the coming year. Upon the approval by a majority vote of the eligible voting members present, the budget shall be considered the basis for the current liabilities. No one is authorized to make changes in the budget or to make unauthorized disbursements without the consent of the church. The fiscal year of the church shall begin January first and end December thirty-first.

SECTION 4: TREASURER

I. The elders shall appoint someone from among the membership to the administrative position of treasurer. This could include a deacon or other elder if prudent. The treasurer is to assist in the responsibility to keep the financial books accurate and up to date, as well as provide financial reports to the church and its elders. The elders may also appoint an assistant treasurer to help in these duties. The elders shall have the authority to replace the treasurer and/or assistant treasurer whenever it seems wise.

SECTION 5: TRUSTEES

I. The elders will select two men from the officers of the church to serve as the trustees of this church and to represent the church in all legal transactions. If there is only one officer, the second trustee will be selected from among the men who are voting members of the church. If there are no church officers, the congregation will select two men from among the voting members to serve as trustees.

SECTION 6: CLERK

I. The elders shall appoint a clerk from among the members of the church. The responsibility of the clerk will be to record all the business transacted by the church, collect all documents submitted to the church at its meetings, and provide for the church and its elders a careful record of the church's business. This record shall be available to the church and its elders. The elders may also appoint an assistant clerk to help in these duties. The elders shall have the authority to replace the clerk whenever it seems wise.

ARTICLE IX: ASSOCIATIONS

SECTION 1: GENERAL STATEMENT

I. The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation common among biblically sound churches, and will seek, insofar as is practical and Scriptural to maintain cooperation with other Biblically sound churches. When it is thought desirable and upon the recommendation of the elders, this church may join itself to an association(s) of churches. Such affiliations may be entered with the expressed consent and approval of the congregation by a majority vote (Acts 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19). Withdrawal from associations may be affected by the same procedure.

II. The purposes in joining an association of churches are: mutual edification, cooperative efforts in spreading the gospel, mutual ministry projects, accountability, providing an avenue whereby grievances may be addressed, and reciprocal counsel. No association shall have any authority or power over this church.

III. Delegates to such associations shall be chosen by the elders of the church, with the elders taking the general oversight of all delegates and business matters.

ARTICLE X: CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

SECTION 1: REGULAR MEETINGS

I. Weekly Meetings: Corporate worship services shall be held weekly on Sundays as the Lord wills. Specific times and meeting locations shall be determined by the eldership. Other gatherings such as those for prayer or fellowship can be established by the eldership and held throughout the week as the Lord wills.

II. Membership Meetings: Every four months the church will hold membership meetings to give pastoral and financial reports to the congregation, and otherwise conduct the business of the church. These should occur in the months of April, August, and December. The proposed budget for the next fiscal year will be voted on in the December meeting.

SECTION 2: OTHER OCCASIONAL MEETINGS

I. Additional congregational meetings may be called by the elders as necessary. They may also be called by one-fourth of the voting members, providing they make a written request for such a meeting. In the latter case, this request must state the reason for the meeting, be signed by one-fourth of the members in good standing and be presented to the elders, who shall in turn make the proper announcement of the meeting. These occasional meetings shall be announced at regular services for at least two successive Lord's Days prior to the meeting. In cases that require urgent and/or immediate action, the pastors may when necessary call for a meeting for informational purposes, for an issue requiring immediate public censure,⁶ or for a vote of the church on financial matters that are urgent or time sensitive.

SECTION 3: VOTING

I. Any member of the church eighteen years of age or over, in good and regular standing, shall have the privilege and responsibility to vote on any question properly brought before the congregation. All voting members should regard their presence at a duly called church meeting with the same seriousness with which they

⁶ See Article VI, Section 2, the paragraph after Step 4.

would regard their attendance at any other meeting of the church. It shall be our goal to discern prayerfully the will of God so that it may be said of us, as it was said of the church in Acts 6, that this "pleased the whole multitude." In situations where unanimity is not realized, except where the constitution requires a different proportionate vote, a simple majority of those voting will make a motion valid. If the meeting of the church was properly called then a quorum shall consist of those members present. If the meeting was called outside the proper procedure by the elders then a quorum shall consist of 10 eligible voting members or 40% of eligible voting members, whichever is greater.

ARTICLE XI: CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

SECTION 1: NATURE

I. This Constitution, like all merely human documents, may be fallible. It simply reflects an earnest and sincere attempt to apply the Scriptures in ordering the life of this local church. Furthermore, we as members of this church have solemnly committed ourselves to follow this Constitution in ordering the life of this church.

SECTION 2: DEFICIENCIES

I. If at any time an elder or member of the church believes that adherence to this Constitution would constitute a violation of the Word of God, he/she should make this known to the elders. If the elders conclude that Biblical wisdom and truth requires an amendment of the Constitution, they must communicate at a properly held meeting of the church according to Article XI of this Constitution and submit relevant amendments to the church and seek by church vote to amend the Constitution.

SECTION 3: AMENDMENTS

I. Amendments to this Constitution must be adopted by three-fourths (75%) of the members present and voting at any regular church meeting or a special meeting called for this purpose. Such proposed amendments shall be distributed in written form to the membership at least two weeks prior to such a meeting.

ARTICLE XII: DISSOLUTION

SECTION 1: THE PROCESS

I. Only the legal trustees, with the support of the full eldership, acting within the spirit of unanimity, may recommend the dissolution of this corporation to the congregation. No less than a three-fourths (3/4) majority affirmation of the members present and voting at a formally called meeting of the church shall be required in order to dissolve this corporation.

SECTION 2: THE RESPONSIBILITIES

I. In the event of the dissolution of this corporation, the official trustees shall ensure that all debts are satisfied, that there is no division of assets, and that all assets herein be distributed to another corporation or corporations with purposes similar to those identified in Article II of this Constitution. No less than a three-fourths (3/4) majority affirmation of the members present shall be required in order to decide upon this distribution of assets.

TRBC

Trinity Reformed Baptist Church