

THE CONSTITUTION OF

Trinity Evangelical Church

ESTABLISHED MARCH 2006

AMENDED 2007, 2010, FEBRUARY 2013, AND FEBRUARY 2022

Preamble

In the church of God, all things are to be done decently and in order. This pertains to the government of the church as much as to the corporate worship of the church. Convinced that Jesus Christ, 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 our church, Trinity Evangelical Church in Larwill, Indiana. These standards do not supplant Scripture but rather are an expression of our understanding of biblical church government under God. While seeking to be biblical in structure, we make no claim that every detail found here is expressly taught by Scripture. These standards are primarily procedural; the doctrinal position of the church may be found in the Confession of Faith.

The purpose of this church is to glorify God through submitting to His Word in true worship, proclaiming grace in Christ to sinners, building up the saints through doctrinal and applicatory preaching of the whole counsel of God, and faithfully observing Christ's sacraments.

Trinity Evangelical Church is dedicated as part of Christ's Church in making disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We desire to be most faithful to this mission as a congregation of believers that is reformed and covenantally oriented, parishional in our growth strategy, and desirous of maturing in Christlikeness in every aspect of life.

ARTICLE I

The Local Church and Electors

A. Members

1. The procedures 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 in order (1 Cor. 14:40). We desire that nothing would disrupt our Christian unity and fellowship with true saints who attend church elsewhere (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 3:1-4).

B. Household membership

1. At Trinity Evangelical Church, membership is normally reckoned by household. A household may be eligible for membership when the head of that household, ordinarily the husband and/or father, has been lawfully baptized in the name

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of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19) and does not contradict his profession through his manner of life (Matt. 7:22-23). The elders in session may admit eligible households and/or individuals into membership at Trinity based upon the positive testimony of two or more elders who have personally spoken with the head of the household or the individual(s) seeking membership at Trinity, and who have heard their profession of faith and ascertained that they have been lawfully 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 a minimum of two elders.

2. When a baptized believer moves to our church, the elders acknowledge his baptism as Christian baptism in receiving him into the membership of the church. This will not be affected by whether the baptism was administered in infancy.
3. If the baptism was administered by an apostate church, or a non-Christian sect or cult, as formally decided by the elders of the church in session, the individual will be instructed on his responsibility to be baptized at the first opportunity. As an act of an ecclesiastical government, a valid baptism does not depend upon the personal integrity of the minister conducting the baptism, or the doctrinal and moral integrity of the administering church. Nevertheless, if the doctrinal and moral corruptions are so far advanced as to require our elders to consider that church to be no Christian church at all, then the baptisms administered by such a church will not be received. Given the complexity of all such issues, the elders will deal with each situation on a case-by-case basis.
4. Membership begins when the head of a household verbally expresses his commitment to Trinity at one of the monthly Head of Household meetings and is formally recognized by the session before the member heads of households.
5. The session (of elders) oversees a membership list, which includes names, baptisms, and communicant status of each person in a member household. As circumstances warrant, individuals from non-member households may join the church. Independent unmarried members are considered a household for purposes of voting. Otherwise, when such a person becomes a member, such an individual's capacity to be an elector will be determined on a case by case basis. Individuals may also come under our pastoral care without coming into formal membership or voting membership as denoted by an action of the session.
6. If any member requests to be released to the care of another Christian church, the session, after hearing good and sufficient reasons for his departure, will release him with a blessing, except as noted below. If any member requests a release after committing a disciplinable offense, the session will delay acting on the request until the disciplinary matter is resolved. If members move from our geographical area, they are charged to find a new church home within six months. This time may be extended at the session's discretion. After this time is expired, they are released from membership. Members of this church who shall

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willfully, without plausible reason or excuse, consistently absent themselves from the Lord's Day worship shall be subject to the steps of church discipline.

7. The elders in session are responsible to oversee these criteria and fulfill their biblical duties to shepherd the flock of God at Trinity. (2 Tim 2:23-26; 1 Peter 5:2,3). *See Article III for full description.*
8. Those who are a part of Trinity Evangelical Church are responsible to fulfill their duties to each other and to the elders as well. (John 17:23; 1 Tim 5:17-20; Heb 13:7,17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)
9. The elders of Trinity Evangelical Church recognize that the head of the household is responsible before God for the spiritual condition of that household. The head of the household therefore makes recommendations to the elders concerning members of his household on such matters as baptism and the Lord's Supper. Under the headship of Christ, the administration of church sacraments (or ordinances) remains with the elders. However, in such administration, the elders are to respect the spiritual responsibility of the head of the household. We defer to the heads of households in discerning the capacity of their young children to partake in the Supper.

C. Electors

1. Those faithful (*see article I and II*) heads of households of Trinity Evangelical Church who vote in church elections will be called electors.
2. Authority of electors: Electors may vote in the elections of elders and deacons, and provide input to the elders and deacons at a monthly meeting. Any "no" vote must be justified from Scripture.
3. Qualified electors: The elders will qualify electors. Three 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.
4. Elections: Elections will be conducted at appropriate times set by the elders.
5. Heads of Households meetings: The congregation will hold a monthly meeting of heads of member households, which will be the normal channel through which the elders and deacons receive advice from the representatives of the church's households.

ARTICLE II

Selection of Elders and Deacons

A. Elders

1. Elections 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 (1 Tim. 3:1), the elders may approach him, or the people of the church

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may suggest his name to the elders. Once he becomes a candidate, the elders will examine the candidate 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 Confession of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the elders of it. All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:2-4).

2. A man may not be placed on the ballot without the unanimous consent of the current elders. Once on the ballot, the electors of the church have the option of voting either "yes" or "no."
3. If the candidate receives the unanimous support of the church as represented (Phil. 2:1-4), the elders will ordain the new elder to the ministry of eldership through the laying on of hands and prayer.
4. The requirement for unanimity among electors may be set aside only through the unanimous consent of the elders, and that only after the elders have carefully considered any objections in the light of Scripture. The elders will set aside such objections if it is clear the objections are unscriptural or unwarranted. However, refusal to overturn these objections does not constitute agreement with the objections on the part of the elders.
5. If the objections are overturned, then one of the elders will meet with those who objected to discuss the elders' decision.
6. If a candidate for office is not elected, then one of the elders will meet with him within one week to discuss the election and answer any questions the candidate might have.
7. Once installed, the elder will serve for life, unless he resigns or is removed.

B. Deacons

1. Elections 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 individuals in the church may suggest his name to the elders or deacons. Once he becomes a candidate, the elders will examine him concerning his doctrine and manner of life. The deacons will then include the candidate in their work in order to prove his fitness for the office (1 Tim. 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 elders to place his name on the ballot. The elders will examine the candidate again with regard to his suitability for the diaconate. If the candidate has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's Confession of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the elders of it. All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:8-13).
2. A man may not be placed on the ballot without the unanimous consent of the current elders. Once on the ballot, the electors have the option of voting either "yes" or "no."

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3. If, in the unanimous judgment of the elders, the candidate receives the clear and obvious support of the church as represented, the elders will ordain the new deacon to the ministry through the laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6).
4. 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.
5. Once installed, the deacon will serve for life, unless he resigns or is removed.

ARTICLE III

Duties of Church Officers

A. Elders

1. The elders are collectively responsible to oversee the following:
 - a. Ruling/shepherding (1 Pet. 5:1-2).
 - b. Equipping (Eph. 4:11-12).
 - c. Prayer/fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3).
 - d. Teaching/preaching (1 Tim. 5:17).
 - e. Administering baptism and the Lord's Table (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).
 - f. Administering church discipline and restoration (1 Cor. 5:1-5).
 - g. Prayer for the healing of the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).
 - h. Delegating responsibilities to the deacons, hiring and dismissing church staff, defining the responsibilities of church staff, and delegating responsibilities to the staff of subordinate ministries. The elders will approve the annual budget.
 - i. Commissioning or licensing ministerial students, and overseeing the course of their training for the eldership. Under the guidance and oversight of the board of elders, such commissioned individuals will have the opportunity to perform all the various ministerial functions of elders, participation in the rule of the church being the only exception.
2. Conduct of elders' meetings
 - a. All usual business of the elders will be conducted at their regular meetings or at special meetings called for a particular purpose. The elders will appoint one of their number to moderate the meetings of the elders, and one to record the minutes of the meetings.
3. Responsibilities of individual elders
 - a. Elders are responsible for those duties delegated to them by the body of elders, 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, whether pastoral or administrative (1 Peter 5:1-3). There is no distinction of rank within the body of elders.

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- b. Under Christ, the highest authority in the local church is the board of elders or presbyters in session. While all the elders are equally involved in ruling the church, some presbyters are to be recognized by the church as also given to the labor of word and doctrine. As elders, all share the same rank and authority without distinction. Nevertheless, 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).
- c. In all meetings of the session of presbyters, each elder has one vote. The meetings of the session will be moderated by an elder selected by the other elders. In their capacity as a session, the elders oversee all the affairs of the church, including the particular labors of teachers and ministers.

4. Compensation

- a. Those elders whose assigned duties preclude them from providing for their families in the ordinary way must be compensated by the church (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

B. Deacons

1. Responsibilities of deacons

- a. Under the general oversight of the elders, the deacons will manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church (Acts 6:2-4). Such responsibilities include preparing and administering the annual budget, building maintenance, fellowship meals, administration of subordinate ministries, office support, and administering the deacons' fund.

2. Conduct of deacons' meetings

- a. All usual business of the deacons will be conducted at their regular meeting, 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 give a general report of their work at each monthly household meeting, they will provide a quarterly financial report to the church, and they will give an annual report to the elders with proposals for the upcoming year.

3. Responsibilities of individual deacons

- a. Individual deacons are responsible for those duties assigned to them by the deacons, as recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts and desires. There is no distinction of rank among the deacons.

4. Administering the Deacons' Fund

- a. In the benevolent functions of the church, the deacons are responsible to maintain the biblical standard of money, charity, work, and related issues (Gal. 6:10; 2 Thess. 3:4-16; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:3-4, 8; Is. 10:1-4).
- b. The Deacons' Fund is available to members of Trinity Evangelical Church to meet pressing needs. When a need is made known through the elders,

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deacons, or members of the church, the deacons will examine the scope and urgency of the need and present it to the elders. Upon approval by the elders, the family or individual will be placed on the Deacons' Fund until the need is met or they are removed for other reasons.

- c. Upon being placed on the list for the Deacons' Fund, the head of the household will be asked to submit an acceptable household budget to the deacons within thirty days. A deacon or elder will be assigned to review the family budget and give counsel and financial advice as necessary.
- d. If able, the head of the household is required to work at a full-time job.
- e. The household will be discouraged from receiving public assistance in the form of food stamps or direct welfare payments, not including medical reimbursements or assistance.
- f. In case of one-time needs exceeding \$1,000, the deacons will seek elder approval for the expenditure at the next regular elder meeting. If the need cannot be met from the Deacons' Fund, the deacons may seek elder approval to move funds from general savings to meet the need. A household budget will not be required for one-time needs paid in full from the Deacons' Fund. However, the deacons will request a budget if the family stays on the list for the Deacons' Fund after that particular need is met.
- g. A deacon will visit families supported by the Deacons' Fund at least once a month to ensure their financial needs are being met. The deacons when necessary will provide budget counseling. If there are spiritual matters that need attention, the deacons will notify the elders. The deacons will report regularly to the elders on the status of families remaining on the list for the Deacons' Fund more than three months.
- h. Indigent giving will be decided by the deacons on a case-by-case basis. As a general rule the deacons will not disburse money to indigents, but will purchase items necessary to meet basic needs in such areas as food, clothing, shelter, and travel.

C. Resignation of elders or deacons

1. If an elder or deacon desires to resign his office or 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 at the next monthly household meeting of their receipt of the letter. If the desire of the elder or deacon concerned is unchanged by the following monthly household meeting, then the elders will read a statement to the assembled men accepting the resignation, or approving the leave of absence.
2. If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal turpitude, then the elders must exercise biblical discipline prior to, or in conjunction with, any consideration of the letter of resignation.

ARTICLE IV

Removal of Elders and Deacons

A. Elders

1. If one of the saints believes an elder may be morally or doctrinally unfit for his office, the scriptural requirement for him is clear: he is to approach that elder individually first (Matt. 18:15), and then with one or two others (Matt. 18:16). If the problem remains, then the individual, with the two or three witnesses, should come to the other elders and present the charges (1 Tim. 5:19).
2. If the charges are doctrinal or moral in nature, and if the other elders unanimously decide that the question merits an investigation and/or trial, then they will (a) inform the member heads of households of the nature of the charges, (b) announce the date(s) of the scheduled investigation and/or trial, and encourage the heads of households to attend.
3. If the charges are unanimously sustained by the other elders, then that elder, depending on the gravity of the charges and the response to the correction, will be rebuked in the presence of the congregation (1 Tim. 5:20), or will be removed from the office of elder (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), or both.

B. Deacons

1. If one of the saints believes a deacon may be morally or doctrinally unfit for his office, the scriptural requirement for him is clear: he is to approach that deacon individually first (Matt. 18:15), and then with one or two others (Matt. 18:16). If the problem remains, then the individual, with the two or three witnesses, should come to the elders and present the charges.
2. If the charges are doctrinal or moral in nature, and if the elders unanimously decide that the question merits an investigation and/or trial, then they will (a) inform the men of the church of the nature of the charges, (b) announce the date(s) of the scheduled investigation and/or trial, and (c) encourage the men to attend.
3. If the charges are unanimously sustained by the elders, then that deacon, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to the correction, may be corrected, or removed from the office of deacon (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

ARTICLE V

Church Discipline

A. Informal church discipline

1. The ordinary course of discipline is informal. Members are encouraged to self-discipline, overlooking the failings of others in love (1 Pet. 4:8), and encouraging other members to be faithful unto the Lord (Matt. 18:15; Heb. 3:12-14).

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B. Formal church discipline

1. Formal church discipline is applied through the formal action and unanimous judgment of the Session of elders.
2. In most cases, when one member sins against another member, the offended member shall confront the offending member (Matt. 18:15). If the offending member will not listen, then the offended member will again approach him with one or two other witnesses (Matt. 18:16). If the offending member still refuses to listen, then the offended member shall bring charges against the offending member to the Session (Matt. 18:17). The Session shall then inform the accused member of those specific charges in a timely manner.
3. In establishing charges against a member, the Session must hear witnesses' testimony, and thus have the authority to call upon witnesses by unanimous consent of the Session (2 Cor. 13:1). The Session shall also call upon the accused member to hear the accused's answer to the charges.
4. If, after hearing witnesses and the accused member's answer, the Session determines that the charges are true, the Session shall unanimously decide what measure of discipline to apply to the accused member. The measures of discipline that the Session may apply include formal public admonishment (2 Thess. 3:14-15), suspension from the Lord's Supper and normal fellowship (1 Cor. 11:27), and if necessary, excommunication from the church (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13).
5. In cases involving scandalous sin, the Session may take immediate disciplinary action for the good of the church, including excommunication, by unanimous judgment of the Session (1 Cor. 5:1-13).
6. In cases wherein a member is acting in a divisive manner and refuses to obey the Session's warnings to repent, the Session may take immediate disciplinary action for the good of the church, including excommunication, by unanimous judgment of the Session (Titus 3:10-11).
7. When the Session has unanimously excommunicated a member, the Session shall inform the church of the excommunication, including the charges against the accused, on an appointed Lord's Day.

C. Pastoral considerations

1. The circumstances of cases requiring church discipline are varied, and thus require pastoral wisdom in prudently applying the biblical principles of discipline in each case. The Session has the authority to determine how those principles will be best applied in light of the circumstances of each case.
2. Any member may seek the Session's guidance as to how to best informally confront another member about sin. In such cases, the member's seeking of pastoral guidance shall not be regarded as the initiation of formal church discipline, but as an aspect of ordinary pastoral care, and thus shall be kept confidential.

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3. In cases wherein one member sins against another member in a scandalous manner, the offended member may seek the elders' intervention immediately, without first confronting the offending member.

D. The subjects of church discipline

1. Any communicant member of a member household may be disciplined by the church. Un-baptized members of member households are subject to pastoral admonishment from the church, but not excommunication since they are not communicant members.
2. Non-member communicant Christians who attend church regularly are subject to pastoral admonition, but not to formal excommunication. Nevertheless, a non-member who is divisive, heretical, scandalous, or factious may be barred from the Lord's Supper and rejected after proper admonition by the Session (Titus 3:10-11).
3. If another church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to Trinity Evangelical Church, then the Session will honor the discipline of the other church, unless after due consultation with the person concerned, the authorities of the other church, and the Presiding Minister of presbytery, the Session unanimously rejects such disciplinary actions as out of accord with the government of Christ.

E. Restoration of excommunicated members

1. Excommunication will end when the Session unanimously affirms that the one under discipline has repented. A confession of this repentance will be presented to the congregation on the Lord's Day, and the Session shall formally announce the restoration.

F. Appeals to presbytery

1. Members of Trinity Evangelical Church may appeal the actions of the Session to the presbytery and/or council of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches. Any appeals to presbytery will be conducted in accordance with the Constitution of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches.

ARTICLE VI

The Lord's Service and The Sacraments

A. The covenantal form of the Lord's Service

1. The Lord's Day service at Trinity Evangelical Church is understood to be a service of renewing the covenantal relationship between God and His people.
2. Since the Lord's Supper is our covenantal meal, we celebrate the Supper at every Lord's Service, enjoining all baptized members of the covenant to come to the Lord's Table.
3. Thus, the order of our worship follows the biblical pattern of Call, Confession, Consecration, Communion, and Commission (Lev. 1:1-9; 9:8-24; Heb. 12:28-29).

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4. Worship services shall be held as often as the session determines, but the regular schedule of meetings shall always include the Lord's Day service following after the pattern of covenant-renewal worship.

B. The nature and practice of baptism

1. Trinity Evangelical Church affirms that baptism is a blessed sacrament of the New Testament instituted by our Lord as a sign and seal of salvation. The sacramental washing with water in the Name of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, officially admits a person into the visible Church, testifies of their identification with the Triune God of Scripture, union with Christ, regeneration, forgiveness of sin, consecration to walk in newness of life, and fellowship in the Body of Christ (Matt. 28:19; Mark 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 2:11-12; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-5; Titus 3:5).
2. Trinity Evangelical Church is an intentionally inclusive congregation of both credo- (believer's) and paedo- (infant in the promissory sense) baptist Christians. The session shall defer to the view of the head of each household in regard to their respective families. Thus, both views shall be charitably supported at Trinity Evangelical Church.
3. Baptismal candidates, whether children or adults, must be approved by the session. Adult converts, and children from credobaptist households, must confess their faith in Christ and willingness to repent of their sins prior to baptism. Minor children in paedobaptist households should be baptized on the basis of one or more parent's faith in Christ, and their understanding of covenantal duties and covenantal inclusion.

C. The Lord's Supper

1. Trinity Evangelical Church affirms that the Lord's Supper or Communion is a blessed sacrament of the New Testament instituted by our Lord as a sign and seal of His redemptive work. By eating the bread and drinking the cup in a worthy manner believers spiritually feed upon Christ, renew their union and communion with Him, acknowledge His redemptive work on their behalf, and renew their thankfulness for His saving work, as well as spiritually commune with other believers (Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 10:14-21; 11:23-26).
2. Since the Lord's Supper is for all the Lord's people, we encourage all baptized Christians (not censured under church discipline) to come to the Lord's Table and so commune with Christ and His body. This includes baptized young children being raised in the discipline and admonition of the Lord.
3. Trinity Evangelical Church affirms that it is biblically appropriate to use leavened bread in the Lord's Supper, and that wine is the only drink suitable for the Lord's Table (Matt. 13:33; 26:29; Acts 2:42).

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ARTICLE VII

Subordinate Ministries

- A.** The elders may unanimously delegate to an individual or board the executive authority of any subordinate ministry established by the elders. This executive responsibility continues at the pleasure of the elders. In order to dismiss such an individual, or remove someone from such a board, a two-thirds vote of the elders is required. If the individual concerned is also an elder, he is excluded from voting on any matters concerning his own case. If separation of a subordinate ministry from Trinity Evangelical Church becomes necessary, that action may be authorized by a unanimous vote of the elders.
- B.** All formal actions concerning subordinate ministries will be entered in the minutes of the elders' meetings.

ARTICLE VIII

Incorporation

- A.** As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Trinity Evangelical Church is not constituted or incorporated by anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the only head of the church.
- B.** Trinity Evangelical Church maintains its status as an unincorporated and unregistered church as a matter of conscience.
- C.** As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Trinity Evangelical Church accepts various burdens and entanglements of civil regulation and taxation under protest.
- D.** Trinity Evangelical Church has constituted herself, under the authority and headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, as an association of natural persons, and recognized as such by the laws of the State of Indiana.

ARTICLE IX

Amendments

- A.** The Confession of Faith and Constitution may be amended at any time through unanimous consent of the elders when the following conditions have been first fulfilled:
 - 1.** There is a first reading of the proposed change at the following monthly heads of households meeting.
 - 2.** A written copy of the proposed change/s is made available to the congregation at church.
 - 3.** The elders seek due consultation with the heads of households of the church at a subsequent monthly heads of households meeting.