

THE CONSTITUTION OF
TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH

115 EAST MARKET STREET · SOUTH WHITLEY, INDIANA 46787
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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 Reformed Church in South Whitley, 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 Reformed 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

Our Statement of Faith

Our confession of faith points to the heart of the Christian faith and represents our understanding of what is ultimately true, good, and beautiful. Our primary reason for existence is to bring glory to God our Creator.

We seek to display our unity in truth with other faithful believers not only in the present but also in the historic Christian church throughout the centuries.

A. Historic creeds

Trinity Reformed Church adheres to the historic Christian Creeds: The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon.

1. The Apostles' Creed (SECOND CENTURY AD)

I believe in God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin, Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hades;

The third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.
Amen.

2. The Nicene Creed (AD 381)

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made;

Who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin, Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into Heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

3. Definition of Chalcedon (AD 451)

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body;

of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood;

like us in all respects, apart from sin;

as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the virgin, the God-bearer;

one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation;

the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ;

even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

B. Historic confession and catechism

The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1788 as adopted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1936 serves as the doctrinal standard of our congregation, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

C. Exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith

We believe the Westminster Confession to be the clearest and most accurate comprehensive confession, yet we believe that even this Confession was the product of fallible but godly men. Thus, by the grace of God, we denote a few exceptions to the 1788 Westminster Confession.

We have not included the Scripture proof texts which the Westminster Divines cited (post-composition). They are often helpful, but their doctrinal views are not always based upon the proof texts in an exegetically accurate way.

1. Chapter 7: Of God's Covenant with Man — Paragraph 2 (cf. Ch. 19, para. 1, 6)

We would clarify that the “covenant of works” was not meritorious, and we deny that any covenant can be kept without faith. Good works, even in this covenant, were a result of faith, as illustrated by the Sabbath rest which was Adam's first full day in the presence of God.

2. Chapter 21: Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day — Paragraph 8

We believe that along with works of piety, necessity, and mercy, the command also calls us to rest our bodies on the Sabbath (Gen. 2:2-3; Ex. 16:30, 31:15-17). We do not believe the intention of Scripture was to prohibit recreation, especially in the context of the fellowship of God's people.

3. Chapter 27: Of the Sacraments — Paragraph 4

Ministers of the Word should ordinarily lead in the administration of the Sacraments, yet we believe that it is permissible for the sacraments to be administered with the oversight of any elder, lawfully ordained.

4. Chapter 28: Of Baptism — Paragraph 4

Trinity allows our credobaptist members to take exception to this paragraph.

5. Chapter 29: Of The Lord's Supper — Paragraph 7

We would clarify that “worthy receivers” of the Lord's Supper should include all baptized covenant members who are able to physically eat and drink the

elements, including very young children being raised in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. We deny that an artificial standard of age or mental capacity is consistent with the Biblical basis for partaking of the Supper. We defer to the heads of households in discerning the capacity of their young children to partake in the Supper. However, we also recognize that the elders of the church hold the keys to the Kingdom of heaven, not the heads of households.

D. Other historic confessions

We are also in essential agreement with the historic confessions of the Reformation, including the Synod of Dort, the Belgic Confession, and the Heidelberg Catechism (together known as the Three Forms of Unity), the London Baptist Confession of 1689, the Athanasian Creed, and the 39 Articles of Religion.

Trinity also affirms the evangelical tenets of Protestantism.

E. CREC Confessional Statement on Sex, Gender, and Marriage

Trinity Reformed Church adopts into its statement of faith the Confessional Statement on Sex, Gender, and Marriage adopted by CREC Council on August 26, 2020, and incorporated into the CREC Constitution.

1. We confess that the church is subject to Christ, who is Lord over all. While church members ought to obey civil rulers in temporal things, provided they are not required by those authorities to sin (Mk. 12:13- 17; Rom. 13:1- 7; 1 Pt. 2:13- 17), the church has a divine right to embody her beliefs in her practices and to carry out the mission Christ has entrusted to her without interference or hindrance. The church as an institution shall remain free from state control in faith, doctrine, and practice, and her members should not be forced to act contrary to their consciences, as informed by the Word of God. With these truths in view, we declare the church's right to reject any attempts on the part of the state to impose on her institutionally or her members individually unbiblical, unnatural definitions of marriage or sexuality.
2. God created man male and female in the beginning for this very reason, that they might be joined together in the covenant of marriage as one flesh (Mark 10:5ff). Marriage as a covenant bond between a man and a woman is an institution founded not in cultural convention or convenience, but in God's act of creation (Gen. 2:23- 24).
3. We resist and reject all attempts to redefine marriage to include same- sex partnerships. Certainly, we desire to serve and love persons with homosexual desires or who engage in homosexual practices. We know we are fellow image bearers and fellow sinners along with them, and we long to show them the compassion of Christ. But we cannot endorse the fulfillment of their desires under any circumstances. Rather, we call on persons with such desires to join us in trusting the Lord Jesus to forgive our sin through his shed blood and transform us by his healing grace.
4. We claim the right for our churches and church members (whatever their particular vocation) to refuse to host, officiate, or in any way support same-sex

“marriage” ceremonies, not out of animus, but out of love for God, neighbor, and truth. Likewise, we refuse to host, officiate, or support other ceremonies that violate biblical teaching on marriage.

5. We reject transgenderism as a perversion of God’s good creational order. There are only two sexes, male and female (Gen. 1:26- 28). Sex is not fluid, it is binary. We reject the notion that gender is determined by one’s feelings, or is detachable from biological and bodily givens. God forms each person genetically as a distinct male or female from the moment of conception. As God is the Creator, and makes each of us either male or female, we cannot unmake and remake ourselves into the opposite sex. Sex is an immutable feature of our identity as creatures; thus, it is impossible for anyone to change his or her sex.
6. Gender dysphoria should not be used to create a protected class of persons, in which one’s feelings override the facts of biology, or in which the rights, dignity, and privacy of transgender persons override the rights, dignity, and privacy of others. Thus, we claim for our churches and church members (in whatever vocation they serve) the right to reject compliance with any public policies or laws that would require us to deny binary sexes, or to accept claims of gender identity that are contrary to one’s God- assigned biology. We reject the legal redefinitions of sex and gender that divorce either of these realities from God- given biology. We claim the right to speak to people according to their God- given sex, rather than reinforcing gender dysphoric confusions by using alternative pronouns. We claim the right to restrict access to intimate facilities (e.g., bathrooms, nursing areas, shelters, etc.), to sex- specific events, etc., strictly according to God- given biological realities. In the case of someone who has already transitioned to the appearance of the opposite sex, the session of the local congregation will determine the wisest and most compassionate course of action.
7. All sexual sins can be forgiven through the shed blood of Christ, including the practice of sodomy and transgenderism. But forgiveness can never be separated from confession and repentance; forgiveness can never be separated from denying oneself and taking up the cross daily; forgiveness can never be separated from fighting against sin and pursuing holiness in the power of the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE II

The Local Church and Membership

A. Household membership

1. At Trinity Reformed Church, membership is normally reckoned by household. A household is defined as one of the following:
 - a. The home of a husband and wife together with their children.
 - b. The home of a single parent together with his children.
 - c. The home of an unmarried, self-supporting adult.

Each head of household, whether the husband/father, single parent, or unmarried adult, is responsible for the spiritual state of his own household.

Christian wives of unbelieving husbands may become members of Trinity together with their minor children. Such wives will be regarded as heads of households by the elders.

B. Pursuing membership at Trinity

1. Households interested in membership at Trinity Reformed Church must do the following:
 - a. The head of household must profess faith in Christ and must have been lawfully baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The head of household's manner of life must also be consistent with his profession of faith.
 - b. The adult members of the household must complete the new members' class. Upon completion, the head of the household (and his wife, if applicable) will meet with the elders to discuss the household's prospective membership. The elders will then determine what further steps, if any, will need to be taken for the household to become a member of Trinity.
 - c. Each household pursuing membership must attend Trinity for a minimum of three months during which time they will complete the new members' class and any other further steps assigned by the elders and become better acquainted with the congregation through regular attendance and fellowship. After this, the elders and head of household will meet to assess whether membership is advisable. The decision ultimately belongs to the elders.
2. When a household is received into membership, the head of household (and his wife, if applicable) will take vows of membership before the congregation on an appointed Lord's Day. These vows are outlined in the Membership Handbook.
3. Children raised within member households at Trinity will be regarded as the head of their own household once they become adults, if they:
 - a. are self-sufficient in providing for their own needs.
 - b. are living in a manner consistent with their profession of faith.
 - c. have met with the elders to discuss their desire to maintain their membership.
4. Members of other CREC churches who relocate to Trinity's vicinity may transfer their membership to Trinity without undergoing the steps outlined in Article II.B.1 above. Transferring members shall take membership vows on an appointed Lord's Day. Prior to receiving them into membership, the elders shall first:
 - a. Consult with transferring members' former elders regarding the members' spiritual health and relationship with their former church.
 - b. Ensure that the transferring members have read and affirm Trinity's Constitution and Membership Handbook.

5. If a male member of Trinity Reformed Church marries a woman who belongs to another church, then the husband shall ensure that his wife is in agreement with the responsibilities of membership at Trinity. He shall also ensure that he and his wife meet with the elders (before or after their wedding) so that the elders may hear her Christian testimony and about her relationship with previous churches. Following that meeting, she shall take vows of membership on an appointed Lord's Day.

C. The responsibilities of members

1. The duties of Trinity's members are:

- a. To maintain a manner of life that is consistent with one's profession of faith in Christ. (Rom. 6:12-14; Gal. 5:16-26; Jas. 1:22-25)
- b. To be unashamed of Christ and His Gospel and willing to faithfully acknowledge Him before men. (Rom. 1:16; Matt. 10:32)
- c. To gladly submit to the oversight of Trinity's elders without giving them reason to groan and to faithfully abide by the Creeds, Confession, and Constitution of Trinity Reformed Church. (Heb. 13:17)
- d. To eagerly maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace within their own homes, at Trinity, and within the broader body of Christ. (Eph. 4:3)
- e. To faithfully handle conflict with other members according to Scripture as explained within Trinity's Constitution and Membership Handbook. (Matt. 18:15-20)
- f. To put away all bitterness, anger, clamor, slander, and malice, refrain from gossip, and be kind and tenderhearted toward each other, forgiving each other as God has forgiven us in Christ. (Eph. 4:31-32)
- g. To work hard with one's own hands and provide for one's own needs so that one has something to share with those in need. Heads-of-households must strive to fulfill the spiritual and physical needs of their own households. (Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:8)
- h. To weekly participate in the Lord's Day worship service at Trinity. (Heb. 10:24-25)
- i. To joyfully support the ministry of Trinity both spiritually and financially, according to one's gifts and means. (1 Cor. 9:9-12; 1 Tim. 5:17)

D. Transferring membership from Trinity

1. Members are free to request a transfer of membership to another Bible-believing church. Members requesting transfer will also provide the elders with the reason for their request. After hearing the reason for the request, the elders will grant the transfer unless the member requesting transfer has, in the elders' judgment, committed a disciplinable offense (SEE ARTICLE VI). In that instance, the transfer will not be granted until the matter has been resolved.

2. Members who relocate to another geographical area have six months to request transfer of their membership to another church. After that time, they will be released from membership.

E. Membership handbook and classes

1. The elders will maintain a Membership Handbook for use by the members of Trinity. At minimum, the Membership Handbook will discuss the following:
 - a. The presbyterian form of church government observed by Trinity and the CREC.
 - b. The responsibilities of elders.
 - c. The responsibilities of members.
 - d. The biblical steps for resolving conflicts between members.
2. The new members' class will cover, at a minimum, the Membership Handbook.

ARTICLE III

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 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). A candidate may also serve as a diaconal assistant for an indefinite period of time. 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."
3. 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.
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.

C. Electors

1. Those faithful (SEE ARTICLE II) heads of households of Trinity Reformed 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 IV

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. Warning/admonishing (Acts 20:31).
 - d. Prayer/fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3).
 - e. Teaching/preaching (1 Tim. 5:17).
 - f. Administering baptism and the Lord's Table (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).
 - g. Administering church discipline and restoration (1 Cor. 5:1-5).
 - h. Prayer for the healing of the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).
 - i. 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.
 - j. Commissioning or licensing ministerial students, and overseeing the course of their training for the eldership. Under the guidance and oversight of the session 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.

- 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 Reformed Church to meet pressing needs. When a need is made known through the elders, 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 V

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, 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 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, 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 (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 VI

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).

B. Formal church discipline

1. Formal church discipline is applied through the formal action and unanimous judgment of the Session of elders.
2. After following all of the steps in the Membership Handbook, the offended member may bring charges against the offending member to the Session (Matt. 18:17). To do so, the offended party shall fill out the Application for Filing Ecclesiastical Charges for each charge and file this form with the Session within four weeks of the offense. 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, by unanimous consent, must consider all available evidence and thus has the authority to conduct an investigation and call upon witnesses (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 normal fellowship at Trinity (Titus 3:10-11), suspension from the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:27), and, if necessary, excommunication from the universal 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 suspension from normal fellowship at Trinity, 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.

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 normal fellowship at Trinity after being warned by the Session (Titus 3:10-11).
3. If another church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to Trinity Reformed 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 suspended or excommunicated members

1. Suspension from normal fellowship at Trinity will end when the Session unanimously affirms that the one under suspension has repented from his divisive behavior. Those who remain unrepentant may be removed from membership at Trinity by the elders and treated as divisive non-members in accord with Article VI.D.2 above.
2. Suspension from the Lord's Supper will end when the Session unanimously affirms that the one under suspension has repented.
3. 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 Reformed 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 VII

The Lord's Service and The Sacraments

- A.** Trinity follows this covenantal form of the Lord's Service:

1. The Lord's Day service at Trinity Reformed 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).
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 Reformed 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 Reformed Church is an intentionally inclusive congregation of both credo- (believer's) and paedobaptist (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 Reformed 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 Reformed 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 and 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 Reformed 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 and 26:29; Acts 2:42).

ARTICLE VIII

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 Reformed 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 IX

Incorporation

- A. As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Trinity Reformed Church is not constituted or incorporated by anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the only head of the church.
- B. Trinity Reformed 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 Reformed Church accepts various burdens and entanglements of civil regulation and taxation under protest.
- D. Trinity Reformed 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 X

Affiliation

Trinity Reformed Church is a member congregation in the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC). As a member congregation within the CREC, we hereby adopt, by reference as part of this constitution, the Constitution of the CREC, as it may be amended from time to time.

ARTICLE XI

Amendments

- A.** The process for amending this constitution is as follows:
1. A provisional change to the constitution is approved unanimously by the Session at a monthly stated meeting.
 2. The proposed change is presented at the following monthly stated Heads of Households meeting. Copies of the proposed changes are made available to the Heads of Households.
 3. The proposed changes are sent to the Tyndale Presbytery Presiding Minister.
 4. The amendment is approved by a unanimous vote at a subsequent stated Session meeting.
 5. If changes of substance are made after the first stated HOH meeting, then the Session will present those changes to the next stated HOH meeting. The amendment would then be voted upon by the Session at the following stated meeting.