

Trinity Fellowship



Churches

Book of Church Order

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Trinity Fellowship Churches Book of Church Order

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1 **1 Foundational Commitments**

2 Trinity Fellowship Churches (hereafter, TFC) is an ecclesiastical union of confessional,
3 connectional, and missional churches committed to maturing and multiplying disciples with
4 the gospel of Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

5 **1.1 Confessional**

6 In TFC, we are united by our common Confession of Faith—one that is Reformed,
7 Christocentric, Continuationist, Complementarian, and Baptist. Such beliefs
8 summarize for us what the Bible teaches and, as such, are the definition of “sound
9 doctrine” and what our elders affirm, teach, and defend.¹

10 1.1.1 Our Confession of Faith is Reformed.

11 Being Reformed, we uphold a doctrine of Scripture, God, Man, Christ, and
12 Salvation consistent with the magisterial Reformers as summarized in their
13 teaching and writing. As a testimony to this, our confession took as its starting
14 point the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (Second London Confession of
15 Faith). This was then changed at various points to be more fully in line with
16 our understandings (e.g., “Of the Church,” “Of Marriage,” “Of Man,” and “Of
17 the Empowering Spirit” was added). Yet, the Reformed heart of the 1689
18 Confession remains intact.

19 1.1.2 Our Confession of Faith is Christocentric.

20 Being Christocentric, we see Christ as central to God's plan of redemption, the
21 Bible, our churches, our message, and our lives. Thus, we “preach Jesus Christ
22 and him crucified,”² lift up the name of Jesus as the only path of salvation,³
23 recognize that the Old Testament bears witness to him in all of its writings, see
24 a right understanding of Jesus Christ as essential to interpreting the Old and
25 New Testaments,⁴ and delight in him as the very centerpiece of God's “good
26 news,” the gospel that offers salvation freely to all who believe in the Lord
27 Jesus Christ. To be a Christian is to be in the deepest way possible “in Christ,”⁵
28 and to be a member of the Church is to be a living member of “the body of

¹ Tit 1:9.

² 1 Cor 2:2.

³ Acts 4:12.

⁴ John 5:39; Luke 24:27.

⁵ Eph 2:6–13.

29 Christ.”⁶

30 1.1.3 Our Confession of Faith is Continuationist.

31 Being Continuationist, we affirm that we now live “in the last days” defined by
32 the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on “all flesh.”⁷ Along with all Reformed
33 Christians, we affirm the necessity of the Spirit's work in regeneration and
34 sanctification. Yet, as Continuationists, we also believe all the New Testament
35 gifts⁸ are available throughout the Church age. Further, these are not just to be
36 believed in but earnestly desired for the building up of the people of God.⁹
37 Such gifts are manifestations of God's power for the revelation of his glory and
38 the great blessing of his Church - and draw the lost into the kingdom of God.
39 Being both Christocentric and Continuationist, we seek to be *robustly*
40 *trinitarian*.

41 1.1.4 Our Confession of Faith is Complementarian.

42 Being Complementarian, we affirm only two genders in God's created order
43 for humanity, male and female; both made “in the image of God.”¹⁰ These two
44 genders possess differing but complementary roles in the family and in the
45 church. In the family, the husband is the head and called to sacrificially love
46 and honor his wife.¹¹ The wife is the suitable helper and is called to love and
47 submit to him.¹² The two are called to energetically support each other.¹³ In the
48 church, elders are to be male,¹⁴ and Scripture says a woman is not “to teach or
49 to exercise authority over a man.”¹⁵ On deacons and gender, see BCO-2.5.
50 Gender roles are never to be used as a basis for affirming any kind of
51 superiority or inferiority but are to be a picture of a unity-in-diversity and
52 diversity-in-unity that glorifies our Creator and becomes a vivid display of the
53 Church and her Savior.¹⁶

⁶ 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12.

⁷ Acts 2:17–21.

⁸ Allowing that the NT gift lists are not exhaustive.

⁹ 1 Cor 12:7–11; 14:1.

¹⁰ Gen 1:27.

¹¹ Eph 5:21–33; 1 Pet 3:1–7; Tit 2:2–6.

¹² Eph 5:21–33; 1 Pet 3:1–7; Tit 2:2–6; Gen 2:18.

¹³ Gen 2:24–25; Eccl 4:9–10.

¹⁴ 1 Tim 3:1–7.

¹⁵ 1 Tim 2:12.

¹⁶ Eph 5:21–33.

54 1.1.5 Our Confession of Faith is Baptist.

55 Being Baptist, we affirm that all those —and only those— who “believe in
56 the Lord Jesus Christ” should be baptized “in the name of the Father and of the
57 Son and of the Holy Spirit” by immersion in water.¹⁷ Baptism is not required
58 for salvation but is a sacrament required for obedience.

59 **1.2 Connectional**

60 We believe it is healthy, strategic, and safe for a church to be inter-dependent and not
61 disconnected from other congregations. We are, therefore, a fellowship of
62 interconnected churches united in the Holy Spirit and committed to building
63 relationships, developing healthy elderships and churches, adhering to our
64 foundational documents, and pursuing mission.

65 1.2.1 Connected through the Holy Spirit

66 The Bible affirms that all Christians are part of the singular “body of Christ”
67 with Christ as its head.¹⁸ There might be “many parts” in this body, but there is
68 only one body.¹⁹ Our ecclesiastical union is, therefore, an application and
69 expression of our deeper and enduring spiritual union.

70 1.2.2 Connected through Relationship

71 This ecclesiastical and organizational union is to be mirrored in committed and
72 God-honoring relationships consistent with what it means to be a part of the
73 household of God.²⁰ We want sincerely and affectionately to regard one
74 another as brothers and sisters in Christ and fellow workers and fellow soldiers
75 and even be ministers to one another's needs.²¹ As we live out our Christian
76 lives, we desire to bear one another's burdens and build one another up, and stir
77 up one another to love and good works.²²

78 1.2.3 Connected through Developing Healthy Elderships and Churches

79 Through conferences, Cohorts, and various other contexts, we are committed
80 to creating healthy elderships of equipped, qualified, encouraged, and

¹⁷ Acts 16:31; Matt 28:19–20; cp. 8:36; 19:4–5.

¹⁸ Eph 1:22–23.

¹⁹ 1 Cor 12:20.

²⁰ Eph 2:19.

²¹ Phil 2:25.

²² Gal 6:2; 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:24.

81 empowered men. We also seek to extend this cooperation, life, growth, and
82 protection to the churches themselves (see BCO-6 for much more on
83 “Fruitfulness” derived from our connectedness).

84 1.2.4 Connected through Our Foundational Documents

85 To undergird our ecclesiastical union, we subscribe to a common Confession
86 of Faith, *Book of Church Order*, and TFC Partnership Agreement. These
87 documents bring critical definition to what we believe, do, and are committed
88 to as member churches of TFC.

89 1.2.5 Connected through Mission

90 Though each church is committed to mission in its own context, we also seek
91 ways to connect with other churches within TFC for church planting, frontier
92 missions, and strengthening the evangelistic culture and initiatives of each
93 member church.

94 **1.3 Missional**

95 In TFC, we are committed to joining God in developing missional disciples and
96 planting and building missional churches.

97 1.3.1 Missional God

98 Our mission is a dim reflection of the *Missio Dei*, “the mission of God.” God's mission
99 is demonstrated in the Father sending the Son, and the Father and Son sending the
100 Spirit.²³ In the same way, our triune God sends out the Church in mission.²⁴

101 1.3.2 Missional Disciples

102 The Church plays a vital role in the fulfillment of the plan of God to reconcile all
103 things together in Christ. Therefore, elders must seek to equip church members as
104 disciples who engage Christ's reign in all of their varied stewardships and vocations.²⁵
105 Such disciples proclaim the gospel, live fruitful lives of good works in all of life, make
106 disciples, and serve the poor.²⁶

²³ John 20:21; 15:26.

²⁴ John 20:21; Matt 28:18–20.

²⁵ Eph 4:11–13.

²⁶ Col 1:20, 28; Matt 5:16; Gal 6:10; Luke 10:25–37; Matt 28:18–20.

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107 1.3.3 Missional Churches

108 In TFC, we seek to make disciples of all the nations by planting and building churches
109 that plant and build churches in the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁷ Further, we seek to
110 identify, equip, and send out church planters; and come alongside like-minded frontier
111 missions efforts.

²⁷ Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8.

112 **2 Church Polity**

113 **2.1 Christ's Authority**

114 Jesus possesses all authority in heaven and on earth.²⁸ He is the head of the Church
115 and, as such, presides over the entire Church.²⁹ Apart from him, a church has no power
116 and no authority to act on his behalf, for Christ as head of the Church is the holder of
117 all power and authority.³⁰ Only Christ's authority is without limits. All human
118 authority is delegated by God and limited according to the God-given spheres of
119 authority.³¹ Church authority is an important God-given sphere of authority with
120 significant and eternal implications.

121 **2.2 The Nature and Context of Church Authority**

122 Jesus gave his disciples authority to bind and loose on earth in the name of heaven.³²
123 The contexts of these verses teach us this binding and loosing is an authoritative
124 determining of who is and who is not considered part of God's people. Furthermore,
125 we can see in the contexts that this binding and loosing is performed through the
126 proper proclamation and stewardship of the gospel and through properly overseeing
127 the membership of a local church. Church membership is a key identifier of a genuine
128 believer. At its core, church authority has power only to oversee and administrate
129 church membership. The church does this through proclaiming the gospel so people
130 might hear, believe, be baptized, admitted to the church, and built up in Christ. It also
131 does this through other important biblical functions of the church, including
132 administering baptism and communion, conducting proper worship, and practicing
133 proper discipline over church membership. Thus, church authority is exercised in the
134 realm of church membership (i.e., its sphere of responsibility is those who are
135 Christians).

136 **2.3 Membership**

137 Each church is a defined gathering of local believers who profess biblical faith in
138 Christ and demonstrate this faith in the preaching of and genuine obedience to his

²⁸ Matt 28:18; Col 2:10; 1 Pet 3:22 et al.

²⁹ Eph 1:22; 4:15; Col 1:18 et al.

³⁰ Col 1:18; 2 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14.

³¹ John 19:11; Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet 2:13.

³² Matthew 16:17-19; 18:15-20.

139 word and in the administration of the sacraments.³³ They are gathered together by
140 mutual agreement to serve as a local body of believers committed to stewarding the
141 gospel, obeying the Scriptures, and advancing the mission of the church to make
142 disciples of all peoples.

143 They are to follow the biblical order of the local church by having elders to govern
144 them and utilizing deacons in leading appropriate ministries of the local church.³⁴ The
145 church, as elders, deacons, and members, operates with true Christian unity, love, and
146 discipline according to good biblical order. Elders exercise their authority given by
147 Christ with the appropriate participation of the congregation. Numerous biblical texts
148 indicate the congregation has an essential part to play alongside the elders'
149 leadership.³⁵

150 TFC allows a degree of latitude in how churches practice congregational participation
151 in decision making. In some churches, elders seek to include the congregation in key
152 decision making through informal relational means, typical of a healthy relationship
153 between a flock and its pastors. Other churches may choose to employ official votes of
154 affirmation for key decisions such as church discipline, the ordination of an elder, the
155 installation of a deacon, the endorsement of a yearly budget, and the approval of by-
156 law changes. TFC allows this latitude but also requires member churches to ensure
157 that local practices and by-laws do not conflict with the mandates of this BCO.

158 **2.4 Elders³⁶**

159 Elders are authorized by and accountable to Christ to oversee, shepherd, and govern
160 God's people as gathered in their local churches. They exercise ecclesiastical authority
161 according to numerous biblical texts.³⁷

162 Elders, overseers, and pastors are synonymous in the New Testament.³⁸ These three
163 descriptions speak of one office that exemplifies Christian maturity, oversees the life

³³ “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists” (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.1.9).

³⁴ Phil 1:1 et al.

³⁵ Acts 6:3; 1 Cor 5:4-5; 6:1-2; 2 Cor 8:19; 1 Tim 3:15; 5:19, 1 John 2:26-27. Also note how most of the epistles are addressed to entire churches and thus the whole church, including the elders who govern, has a collective responsibility for fidelity and fruitfulness.

³⁶ We understand our polity either as local church presbyterianism or elder-rule congregationalism. Either way, we all agree that the exercise of church authority is in the hands of local elderships.

³⁷ Matt 18:16,18; Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4-5; 5:17; 2 Tim 4:1-5; Tit 2:15; Heb 13:17; Jam 3:1; 1 Pet 5:2.

³⁸ Tit 1:5, 7; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1, 2.

164 and mission of the church, and cares for and directs the local church according to the
165 word of God. The norm for elders is to serve as part of a plurality, not as a sole elder.³⁹

166 Elders are commissioned to exercise authority in specific ways. First, they are to teach
167 God's word faithfully and with full authority as those appointed by God to proclaim
168 his word to the local church and its mission field so the lost might be saved, the saints
169 equipped and matured, and God glorified and worshipped.⁴⁰

170 Second, they are to oversee God's people and ensure their safety and success by
171 guiding God's people into biblical truth and wisdom, leading them in proper biblical
172 worship, overseeing the administration of the sacraments, resisting false doctrine and
173 false leaders, and equipping and deploying God's people to jointly build up the body
174 of Christ and perform its proper functions.⁴¹

175 Third, they are to lead the whole church in the discipline of church members both in
176 their admission and their dismissal. This is done in conjunction with the whole church
177 and for the care and protection of the church, to rescue the sinner, to preserve the
178 reputation of the church, and to glorify God.⁴²

179 Finally, elders are uniquely responsible before God for the life and mission of the local
180 church.⁴³ As such, church members are called to support them and submit to their
181 leadership as circumscribed by the Word of God.

182 **2.5 Deacons**

183 Deacons are specialized ministers of a local church designated for service in particular
184 tasks of ministry.⁴⁴ Their office requires the same type of Christian character as that
185 described for an elder but does not require the ability to teach or lead like an elder.⁴⁵
186 Deacons do not hold the authority of an elder but nevertheless can possess significant
187 responsibility in the life and mission of a local church. They organize and execute key
188 ministries of a church. TFC allows for churches to hold different convictions about
189 whether women can be designated as deacons. Notwithstanding, we do so committed
190 to the biblical principles related to male and female roles being appropriately

³⁹ Acts 11:30; 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim 4:14; Tit 1:5

⁴⁰ John 21:15; Eph 4:11-16, 1 Tim 5:17; 2 Tim 2:15; 3:16-17; 4:1-5; Tit 1:9; 2:15.

⁴¹ Acts 20:28; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4-5; Tit 1:7; 1 Pet 5:2.

⁴² Matt 18:16,18; 16:18-19; John 20:23; 1 Cor 4:14-5:13; 2 Cor. 13:1-4.

⁴³ 1 Cor 3:12-15; Heb 13:17; Jam 3:1.

⁴⁴ E.g., Acts 6:1-7.

⁴⁵ 1 Tim 1:8-13.

191 expressed in this office.⁴⁶

192 **2.6 Discipline**

193 Every church is called to exercise biblical church discipline.⁴⁷ Each member church of
194 TFC will have a clear policy of church discipline and commit to practice it faithfully.
195 This will include maintaining a clear membership roll that is available to every church
196 member. Each member church of TFC will have a clear policy of addressing charges
197 against elders according to BCO-8 and passages such as 1 Tim 5:19-21.

198 TFC agrees to allow appropriate appeals of church discipline and pastoral charges.
199 The judgments rendered in such appeals will be duly honored as an official ruling of
200 TFC. An appropriate response to any judgment shall be a condition of continued
201 partnership. These appeals will follow the procedures outlined in the Rules of
202 Discipline. The Rules of Discipline are subject to the approval of the General
203 Assembly.

204 **2.7 Denominational Leaders**

205 In order for our local churches to thrive and remain faithful, these churches delegate
206 certain authority to certain TFC elders to fill denominational roles and structures
207 within TFC. This stewardship gives those elders in denominational roles and
208 structures the right to do certain things within our denomination, such as adjudicate
209 charges against elders, censure elderships as needed, coordinate mission, approve
210 ordinations, and certain other functions articulated in the BCO. Such elders in
211 denominational roles and structures do not hold any church authority apart from that
212 properly assigned to them from local church elders.⁴⁸

213 We understand that God uses gifted men to serve in various functions beyond the local
214 church for the greater good of the Church and her mission.⁴⁹ Some in TFC would
215 understand such functions to be apostolic or even the functions of a modern-day,
216 “small-a” apostle.⁵⁰ Others would understand such functions as simply necessary for
217 the health and mission of the overall Church and thus most naturally fulfilled by those

⁴⁶ E.g., 1 Tim 2:12; 3:1–13; Eph 5:21–33.

⁴⁷ Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5.

⁴⁸ This is written from the perspective of ordered churches. Cases of disorder, e.g. churches without elders or an undefined membership, can affect how authority is exercised.

⁴⁹ “Church” here stands for the broader visible Church beyond a singular local church, while, “church” stands for a local church.

⁵⁰ For the nomenclature of “‘small-a’ apostle” see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 905–911.

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218 with the appropriate gifts. We believe that the various committees and their chairmen
219 within TFC are appropriate places for those so gifted and elected within TFC. We also
220 expect that there will be multiple opportunities for such men to serve within TFC that
221 do not require a formal role yet still are under proper biblical authority. All TFC roles,
222 formal or informal, are under the authority of the elders of TFC, serve at their behest,
223 and function as stewards of the charge given them by the TFC elders.

224 **3 Partnership**

225 **3.1 Scriptural Bases**

226 All Christians are members of the body of Christ, united with him and, therefore,
227 united to one another.⁵¹ The New Testament is rich with examples of local churches
228 operating inter-dependently. They are planted by teams and individuals from other
229 churches.⁵² They contribute to the needs of other churches.⁵³ They maintain a
230 connection with missionaries planting churches on the mission field.⁵⁴ They form city-
231 wide elderships.⁵⁵ They come together to decide how to respond to doctrinal crises.⁵⁶
232 They share common practices that are normative.⁵⁷ They are subject to the same
233 apostolic leadership.⁵⁸

234 **3.2 The Nature and Extent of Our Partnership**

235 We conclude from this that local churches, operating in their God-given authority,
236 should voluntarily associate with each other for the purpose of forming deep
237 partnerships that will best help them promote their mutual fidelity and fruitfulness.

238 We believe that the highest authority in the church today is that of local elders. We
239 believe that denominational leadership is meant to serve local churches as a
240 stewardship of the responsibilities and authority given to them by local churches and
241 their elders. Any partnerships formed must not override the clear biblical authority or
242 function of the local church and its elders. It must not create an additional category of
243 authority above that of elders.

244 Therefore, commitment to denominational associations and partnerships must remain
245 voluntary. But this does not mean such partnerships are trivial. Local churches can
246 choose to cooperate at very deep levels to best ensure their respective and collective
247 fidelity and fruitfulness in light of the truths of Scripture. Such cooperation can
248 involve the oversight and care of denominational leadership and employment of the
249 God-given gifts of such leaders. No actions or decisions shall be made by any office,
250 staff, or committee apart from the explicit authorization of the elders as documented in

⁵¹ 1 Cor 12:12–20.

⁵² Acts 8:4-8; 11:19-21; 13:1-3.

⁵³ 2 Cor 8-9.

⁵⁴ Acts 14:27; 18:22.

⁵⁵ Acts 15:3; 20:17; Tit 1:5.

⁵⁶ Acts 15.

⁵⁷ Acts 11:16.

⁵⁸ 1 Cor 4:21; 12:28; Eph 2:20.

251 the BCO, the Confession of Faith, and official decisions appropriately ratified by the
252 General Assembly (see BCO 4.3).

253 **3.3 Voting In Our Partnership**

254 All denominational elections shall be by nomination and popular election by local
255 church elders. A quorum consists of at least half of the voting members of the
256 respective electing body. A quorum must be present for all binding votes.
257 Representatives who are unable to travel shall be allowed to participate and vote via
258 teleconference. When multiple seats are being filled, this popular vote shall require a
259 minimum of 25% of the respective electing body (Quorum). When one office is being
260 filled, the threshold shall be a simple majority. Runoffs may be necessary. All popular
261 votes in this BCO require this same approach. All terms shall commence at the
262 beginning of the next calendar year unless indicated otherwise. If there are more than a
263 majority of committee members who have the same term lengths, they must cast lots
264 to stagger their terms by plus or minus one year so that no more than half of them will
265 expire simultaneously.

266 With all of the above convictions in mind, the following sections describe the nature,
267 scope, forms, and function of our partnership.

268 **4 Forms of Our Partnership**

269 **4.1 Cohorts**

270 The basic building block for TFC is a Cohort. Typically, Cohorts are 2-10 churches
271 that agree to cooperate together for mutual fidelity and fruitfulness. They can be
272 formed along geographic, cultural, or relational lines.

273 Every member church of TFC will join a Cohort unless prevented by extenuating
274 circumstances. Churches may form Cohorts across regions. Cohorts meet as frequently
275 as mutually helpful, with a recommended minimum of a quarterly meeting of
276 representative pastors, preferably in person, from each Cohort church.

277 Every year, the Cohort shall elect one of their pastors to serve as Chairman. Any two
278 Cohort pastors can nominate a pastor to fill this role. The Chairman is elected by a
279 popular vote. He may serve multiple terms. The Chairman will help to facilitate the
280 function of the Cohort through communication, organization, and example. The
281 Cohort churches should consider how to best support the Chairman in his efforts,
282 including financial compensation.

283 The local Cohorts are less formal than Regional, and General Assemblies and thus
284 need no formal approval. The Cohort chairman shall register his Cohort with the
285 respective Region (s). If there are any significant issues that cannot be resolved in the
286 Cohort, the Cohort shall refer the matter to the Region representing the majority of the
287 Cohort members. In the case where there is no regional majority, the Cohort shall refer
288 the matter to the Chairman's Region. The Regional Assembly has the responsibility to
289 oversee the health and effectiveness of its cohorts both individually and as a whole.
290 The RA can disband a Cohort by majority vote for sufficient reasons. Sufficient
291 reasons include a Cohort is becoming divisive, cliquish, exclusive, and is no longer
292 fulfilling the mandate of the Cohorts. If a Cohort is cross-regional, any of the RAs
293 connected to it can (by majority vote) disband the Cohort.

294 The Cohort's prime goals are:

- 295 1. To build strong relationships among pastors and church members in the Cohort.
- 296 2. To encourage, care for, and mentor fellow pastors and pastoral candidates for
297 optimal pastoral health.
- 298 3. To cooperate in church life and mission in a substantial way that best serves the
299 Cohort churches.

300 **4.2 Regional Assemblies**

301 4.2.1 Overview

302 Regional Assemblies are made up of the elderships from 5-100 churches in a
303 given cultural or geographic context. The Regional Assembly is where the
304 more formal functions outlined in this section are accomplished, such as
305 Church Planting and Adoption decisions, Ordination Certifications, Regional
306 Adjudications, and Financial decisions. The more relational aspects of our
307 partnership shall be the responsibility of the Cohorts rather than the Regional
308 Assemblies. Churches in the Region should consider giving up to 4% of their
309 general funds towards church planting and other efforts of the Region.

310 4.2.2 Regional Assembly Meetings

311 The RA shall meet at least once per year and when called by at least 25% of
312 the representatives. It shall choose a location that is most convenient for the
313 representatives. Elders who are unable to travel shall be allowed to participate
314 and vote via teleconference.

315 4.2.3 Forming Regions

316 Regions shall be formed by the nomination of any five GA members who want
317 their churches to form a new region. The formation of the new Region requires
318 a simple majority vote of the GA.

319 4.2.4 Regional Chairman

320 The RA shall elect one of their pastors to serve as Chairman. The Regional
321 Chairman is to provide leadership to the Region as a steward of the
322 responsibilities and authority given to him by the RA and its elders. Any three
323 RA pastors can nominate a pastor to fill this role. Nominations shall be
324 submitted to the RA 30 days before the election. The Chairman is elected by
325 popular vote. He shall serve a three-year term. He shall serve no more than two
326 consecutive terms. The Chairman will help to facilitate the function of the RA
327 through communication, organization, and example. His primary
328 responsibilities are to organize the RA meetings and to ensure the healthy
329 function of RA Committees in accordance with the BCO. If possible, the
330 Region should choose by popular vote a moderator distinct from the Chairman
331 to facilitate the meetings. The Chairman may moderate RA gatherings. The
332 Moderator shall use the rules chosen by the popular vote of the RA. The RA
333 churches should consider how to best support the Chairman in his efforts,

334 including financial compensation, as needed.

335 4.2.5 Regional Committees

336 As needed, the RA shall elect the necessary committee members. Committees
337 shall have a minimum of three members. The Judicial Review Committee shall
338 have a minimum of five members. These members shall be nominated by any
339 three RA elders and elected by a popular vote (see BCO-3.2). Each committee
340 shall have a chairman. Any three RA elders can nominate a pastor to fill the
341 chairman role. Nominations need to be submitted to the RA 30 days before the
342 election. The committee members and chairmen are elected by a popular vote.
343 They shall serve a three-year term. They may serve multiple terms.

344 4.2.5.1 Regional Church Planting and Adoption Committee

345 Regional Assemblies shall elect a Regional Church Planting and
346 Adoption Committee that is qualified to process and oversee all
347 church plants and adoptions in their Region per Recommendations
348 and Requirements for Church Plants and Adoptions. Churches that are
349 added to TFC will do so by following the processes in these
350 Recommendations and Requirements, signing all required partnership
351 agreement documents (BCO 7), and being appropriately reviewed and
352 received by a 2/3 majority vote of a quorum of the respective RA. The
353 Recommendations and Requirements for Church Plants and
354 Adoptions are subject to the approval of the GA.

355 4.2.5.2 Ordination Certification Committee

356 Regional Assemblies shall elect an Ordination Certification
357 Committee that is qualified to process and oversee all ordinations in
358 their Region per Recommendations and Requirements for Ordination
359 Certification. The Recommendations and Requirements for
360 Ordination Certification are subject to the approval of the GA.

361 4.2.5.3 Judicial Review Committee

362 Regional Assemblies shall elect a qualified Judicial Review
363 Committee that is trained and equipped to process any and all
364 adjudications and appeals brought from local churches in their Region
365 per the Rules of Discipline. The Rules of Discipline are subject to the
366 approval of the GA.

367 4.2.5.4 Regional Finance Committee

368 Regional Assemblies shall elect a qualified Regional Finance
369 Committee that is trained and equipped in church finance to organize
370 and present a yearly budget in their Region per the Recommendations
371 and Requirements for Finance Committees. The Recommendations
372 and Requirements for Finance Committees are subject to the approval
373 of the GA.

374 **4.3 General Assembly (GA)**

375 The General Assembly of Elders is comprised of one representative pastor from each
376 TFC church. It gathers to oversee our association. It meets annually and when called
377 by at least 25% of the representatives. It shall choose a location that is most
378 convenient for the representatives. Representatives who are unable to travel shall be
379 allowed to participate and vote via teleconference. It shall have the following
380 responsibilities:

381 4.3.1 Formation of Committees

382 The GA shall form and oversee any committee (see BCO-4.4) they deem
383 necessary for the successful function of this association. Such committees will
384 serve at the will of the GA and report to the GA at least annually. Nominations
385 for committee members must be submitted at least 30 days before the meeting
386 of the GA and will be elected by the popular vote of the GA (see BCO-3.2).

387 4.3.2 Confession of Faith

388 The GA shall oversee the Confession of Faith and any proposed changes to the
389 Confession of Faith. Any changes to the Confession of Faith must be brought
390 by a GA Committee or any 5 GA representatives. Proposed changes must be
391 submitted at least 120 days before the meeting of the GA and can only be
392 ratified by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of the GA.

393 4.3.3 Book of Church Order

394 The GA shall oversee the BCO. Any changes to the BCO must be brought by
395 any GA committee or any three GA representatives. Proposed changes to the
396 BCO must be submitted to all GA members at least 90 days prior to meeting.
397 Changes to the BCO can only be made with a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of the GA.

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- 398 4.3.4 General Assembly Chairman
- 399 4.3.4.1 The GA shall elect a Chairman annually from their own number. The
400 Chairman must be an objective moderator without conflicts of interest
401 in his role. He shall not be a voting member of the Oversight
402 Committee nor paid staff for TFC.
- 403 4.3.4.2 The Chairman shall be nominated by at least three GA members and
404 elected by a popular vote (see BCO-3.2). Nominations for the GA
405 Chairman must be submitted at least 30 days before the meeting of
406 the GA and will be elected by the popular vote of the GA (see BCO-
407 3.2).
- 408 4.3.4.3 The Chairman will moderate the following meeting of the GA using
409 *Robert's Rules of Order* or an alternative set of rules approved by 2/3
410 of the GA.
- 411 4.3.4.4 The Chairman will serve as the point of contact for organizing the
412 agenda for the annual meeting and any special meetings of the GA.
- 413 4.3.4.5 Any three representatives may initiate a request for a special meeting
414 through the Chairman. The Chairman shall present the request from
415 the representatives verbatim to poll the GA in order to ascertain
416 whether there is 25% or more of the GA interested in a special
417 meeting. The poll results shall be made available to all GA
418 representatives.
- 419 4.3.5 Motions and Reports
- 420 The GA shall vote on any motions or reports brought by any committee or any
421 three representatives. All motions and reports must be received by the GA
422 representatives 30 days prior to meeting. Decisions on these motions and
423 report responses will require a simple majority vote.
- 424 4.3.6 Contributions
- 425 The GA shall receive and manage contributions through the use of appropriate
426 committees to promote the health and growth of TFC. All member churches
427 are asked to give 2% of their annual general fund to this central fund, 4% of
428 their church's general fund to regional functions, and another 4% of their
429 general fund to mission work of their choice, including regional and TFC-wide
430 efforts in church planting and the global mission work of TFC.

431 4.3.7 Recommendations and Requirements

432 The GA shall approve all and any guidelines and for any function of TFC. No
433 funds will be spent, nor any binding actions imposed apart from established
434 guidelines, budgets, and requirements explicitly approved by the GA.
435 Recommendations and Requirements shall require a 2/3 majority vote by the
436 GA.

437 **4.4 Committees of the General Assembly⁵⁹**

438 4.4.1 Overview of GA Committees

439 Committees shall consist of elders of TFC especially qualified for the duties of
440 the respective committee. Committees may also contain exceptionally qualified
441 members from the churches of TFC who serve in an unofficial, advisory
442 capacity. Committees are tasked by the GA for specified purposes. Committees
443 are to provide leadership to address specific goals as stewards of the
444 responsibilities and authority given to them by the GA and its elders. They
445 serve at the will of the GA and should orient themselves to best inform and
446 equip the GA for making key decisions for TFC.

447 4.4.2 Appointments and Terms

448 Committee members shall be nominated by any three GA members and elected
449 by popular vote (see BCO-3.2). All nominations for committee members must
450 be received by the GA representatives 30 days prior to meeting. The number of
451 committee members should be an odd number from a minimum of three up to
452 whatever size is most conducive to their task. They can include non-elders up
453 to 1/3 of their total number; however, non-elder committee members are not
454 voting members and may not be empaneled in any adjudicatory proceedings.
455 Temporary committee members shall serve a one-year term, subject to re-
456 election. Permanent committee members shall serve a three-year term.

457 4.4.3 Committee Chairmen

458 Each committee shall have a chairman who will serve to facilitate discussion,
459 cooperation, and the accomplishment of the committee's goals. Each Chairman
460 must be an elder of TFC. Each committee chairman, except for the Oversight
461 Committee, shall be nominated by any member of his respective committee

⁵⁹ Note that the PCA and the SBC use a similar organizational structure and appear to be very faithful and fruitful in carrying out their goals. See <https://www.pcaac.org/what-we-do/> and <https://vimeo.com/224574483>, respectively.

462 and elected by popular vote of the members of his committee. Each GA
463 Committee chairman may serve up to three years before requiring re-election.
464 No chairman may serve more than two consecutive terms.

465 4.4.4 Chairman of the Oversight Committee

466 The Chairman of the Oversight Committee shall be nominated by any three
467 GA members. Nominations shall be submitted to GA members at least 30 days
468 before meeting. The Chairman shall be elected by popular vote to a three-year
469 term. He shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. The Chairman will
470 facilitate and coordinate the Oversight Committee's activities and serve as the
471 President of TFC.

472 4.4.5 Committee Reports

473 Committee members shall issue a report at least annually. Such reports should
474 be presented to best inform and equip the GA to make the needed decisions.
475 With this in mind and if applicable, committee reports shall include majority
476 and minority opinions on the issue in question—even if the minority is only
477 one member of the whole committee. This will best serve the GA's decision-
478 making. Committee Reports must be submitted to the GA at least 30 days prior
479 to the meeting.

480 4.4.6 Permanent Committees

481 The following committees are permanent committees: Church Development
482 Committee (CDC), Church Planting & Adoptions Committee (CPAC), Central
483 Finance Committee (CFC), Global Missions Committee (GMC), Oversight
484 Committee (OC), and Polity Committee (PC).

485 Each of these permanent committees shall have members elected to a term of
486 three years. They may recommend budgets to be overseen by the Finance
487 Committee and presented to the GA, and they may requisition and oversee
488 staff as needed.⁶⁰ They shall all serve the GA in its decision-making authority.

489 4.4.6.1 Church Development Committee

490 The Church Development Committee shall work to establish

⁶⁰ N.B. – Committee members will usually serve as unpaid volunteers. Given the inherent limitations of volunteer service, it will be a normal practice for a very active permanent committee to hire staff to work under the oversight of the committee. This may include a Director and other necessary staff.

491 Recommendations and Requirements related to pastoral ministry and
492 church life. They shall also develop and disseminate any resources
493 helpful for pastoral and church development, life, and mission. They
494 shall organize and present appropriate conferences and seminars to
495 best serve TFC with input from the Theology Committee, the
496 Oversight Committee, and any other relevant committee. Their
497 strategic plan for conferences and seminars must be approved by the
498 GA before implementation. This plan shall be submitted as a report
499 with appropriate motions to the GA.

500 4.4.6.2 Church Planting & Adoptions Committee

501 The Church Planting & Adoptions Committee shall oversee
502 Recommendations and Requirements for the Church Planting and
503 Adoption Committees in the Regions. The committee shall also
504 develop and provide the necessary resources to support healthy and
505 vigorous church planting and adoptions among the regions and
506 beyond in TFC.

507 4.4.6.3 Finance Committee

508 The Finance Committee shall coordinate with all other committees
509 and staff and all motions involving financial expenditure. They shall
510 receive proposals and work with the various parties to present a
511 unified budget to the GA for their approval. The Finance Committee's
512 proposed budget shall be introduced as a committee report to be
513 received, amended, and approved at the GA annual meeting.

514 4.4.6.4 Global Missions Committee

515 The Global Missions Committee shall oversee Recommendations and
516 Requirements for the Global Missions work. This is a critical aspect
517 of our mission. Its role is to provide clarity for our elders and
518 churches. The target for this committee is the *unreached* peoples of
519 the earth,⁶¹ while the Church Planting & Adoptions Committee will
520 be concerned about church plants in areas being reached throughout
521 the globe. They will research existing opportunities to help our local

⁶¹ Unreached peoples are historically defined as those ethnic groups with less than 2% who are evangelical Christians. See Zane Pratt, "Here's What We Mean by Unreached Peoples and Places," <https://www.imb.org/2016/11/22/what-do-we-mean-by-unreached-peoples-and-places/>

522 churches better steward the limited resources they have.

523 4.4.6.5 Oversight Committee

524 The Oversight Committee shall work with all the various committees
525 to present an orderly agenda for the GA annual meeting. They shall
526 present their reasoned input in response to all committee reports. They
527 shall ensure corporate ethical, legal, and financial compliance for TFC
528 and serve as the organizational board for non-profit law purposes.
529 They shall steward the BCO and by-laws. The President and the
530 Oversight Committee shall communicate for TFC by representing
531 established values, documents, policies, and past, present, and
532 planned activities. The committee may requisition and oversee staff to
533 help accomplish their goals. This staff could include an Executive
534 Administrator for TFC. Further Recommendations and Requirements
535 for the Oversight Committee shall be ratified by the GA.

536 4.4.6.6 Polity Committee

537 The Polity Committee shall oversee amendments to the Book of
538 Church Order and offer their expert advice to the GA and its
539 committees on any matter pertaining to the Book of Church Order.
540 When a particular decision is required on the proper interpretation and
541 application of the Book of Church Order, the Polity Committee shall
542 make a ruling that shall stand until the next GA meeting. At the next
543 GA meeting, the GA must vote whether to uphold or override the
544 ruling. This shall be done by a simple majority vote. The ruling must
545 be submitted as a Polity Committee report to the GA. The Polity
546 Committee will also develop Recommendations and Requirements for
547 itself as needed. These must be ratified by the GA.

548 4.4.6.7 Theology Committee

549 The Theology Committee shall work to establish Recommendations
550 and Requirements for Ordination Certification, including introducing
551 any needed amendments or commentary. They shall also help steward
552 the TFC Confession of Faith by receiving and interacting over
553 amendments, questions, or comments from TFC eldership, by
554 proposing recommended amendments for the General Assembly, and
555 by engaging and reporting to the GA on key theological issues related
556 to the Confession of Faith. Additionally, the Theology Committee

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557 shall make recommendations to other committees related to key
558 theological issues pertinent to TFC. The Theology Committee will
559 also develop Recommendations and Requirements for itself as
560 needed.

561 4.4.7 Forming New Committees

562 Any motions within the GA to form a committee shall specify the scope and
563 goals of the committee. Any funding needed for the work of the committee
564 shall be first approved by the GA.

565 4.4.8 Removal of Committee Members

566 Each committee will define their duties and conduct per the Recommendations
567 and Requirements for Committees stewarded by the Polity Committee.
568 Committee members may be removed by their respective committee if a 2/3
569 majority of the committee vote and agree that the committee member has
570 either been intentionally disruptive or consistently uncooperative or
571 persistently negligent in duty. He shall be removed immediately upon such a
572 vote. Such removals may be appealed to the Court of Appeals by any member
573 of the committee. The Court of Appeals must hear the respective case and
574 render a decision based on the BCO, this paragraph included. Care must be
575 taken both to consider the view of the majority of the committee but also to
576 protect the committee member and TFC from unjust politicking or
577 partisanship. It is better to err in retaining a difficult committee member than to
578 harm the health that can come through including diverse perspectives on a
579 committee.

580 **5 Fidelity of Our Partnership**

581 **5.1 Confession of Faith**

582 We help ensure biblical fidelity in our churches by mutually agreeing to a common
583 and historic Confession of Faith. It is our “common” confession in that it is the
584 personal confession of faith for every elder in TFC. Failure to subscribe to this
585 confession with duly noted additions and exceptions is grounds for the removal of
586 ordination certification from TFC. It is a “historic” confession in that it is largely
587 derived from the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith but with modifications made to it.

588 Any pastor with exceptions to our Confession of Faith must be certified by the
589 Regional Ordination Certification Committee according to our established Ordination
590 Recommendations and Requirements.

591 **5.2 Ordination Recommendations and Requirements**

592 We help ensure fidelity by creating agreed-upon Ordination Recommendations and
593 Requirements that allow us to certify an elder's ordination. Elders are gifts from the
594 ascended Jesus to local churches.⁶² As such, it is the responsibility of local churches to
595 recognize and steward the development of elder candidates. This includes all relevant
596 training and experience followed by a methodical and clear ordination process.
597 Ordination to the office of elder is a local church function that is certified by TFC. All
598 TFC pastors will be certified for ordination by Ordination Recommendations and
599 Requirements established by the GA of elders and their respective committees. These
600 Ordination Recommendations and Requirements will be approved by a 2/3 majority
601 vote of the GA and will become binding for all TFC ordination certifications.

602 **5.3 Church Discipline**

603 Church discipline is an essential practice of the New Testament church that protects
604 the purity of the church,⁶³ the witness of the church to the world,⁶⁴ and the salvation of
605 genuine Christians.⁶⁵ Although a difficult function to perform, it is necessary for the
606 good of the church, her mission, and the fame of Christ.

607 Each member church of TFC must have a clear and accessible policy of church
608 discipline for all church members. They must also maintain an accurate membership

⁶² Eph 4:7–12.

⁶³ 1 Cor 5:6–8.

⁶⁴ 1 Cor 5:1.

⁶⁵ 1 Cor 5:5.

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609 roll that is available to every church member. Each church shall ensure members are
610 aware of this policy and trained in its proper use.

611 Each member church of TFC must have a clear and accessible policy of addressing
612 charges against elders according to 1 Tim 5:19–21 and commit to practice it faithfully.
613 Each church shall ensure members are aware of this policy and trained in its proper
614 use.

615 TFC agrees to allow appropriate appeals of church discipline and elder charges. The
616 judgments rendered in such appeals will be duly honored as an official ruling of TFC.
617 An appropriate response to any judgment shall be a condition of continued
618 partnership. These appeals will follow the procedures outlined in the Rules of
619 Discipline in this Book of Church Order.

620 **6 Fruitfulness of Our Partnership**

621 **6.1 Church Health**

622 6.1.1 Cooperation

623 Churches in TFC are strongly encouraged to partner together in the various
624 training, care, and mission activities they offer. This should include first
625 notifying other churches in their Cohort and Region of any seminars, courses,
626 conferences, or retreats that they are offering that might be helpful to another
627 church to attend. Secondly, it should include sharing all curricula and lessons
628 learned that will help other churches and church ministries. This partnership
629 will thrive in proportion to the concrete efforts made to share resources and to
630 minister together as churches. Each Cohort and Region is encouraged to create
631 a robust communication system to promote such cooperation.

632 6.1.2 Mediation Assistance

633 The Regional Judicial Committees, with help from any relevant GA
634 committees, should train select individuals in personal and church mediation.
635 Additionally, the regions may choose to consult with and employ Christian
636 ministries with the expertise in mediation to both train their pastors as well as
637 provide needed mediation. Mediation is almost always a better choice for any
638 church conflicts before adjudication is pursued and is a prerequisite for most
639 disciplinary proceedings in TFC.

640 6.1.3 Abuse and Reporting Recommendations and Requirements in TFC

641 6.1.3.1 TFC Churches in the US

642 Church health must also include at least some statement about abuse
643 and reporting standards. A full statement of our Abuse
644 Recommendations and Requirements will be created by an ad-hoc
645 Committee of the General Assembly within 24 months of the
646 formation of TFC.

647 Until those standards are created, TFC is committed to mirroring the
648 most aggressive reporting requirements under state law(s). TFC
649 churches must also comply with all relevant state laws that speak to
650 these issues.

651 Elders and staff members in TFC churches and staff of TFC itself are

652 mandatory reporters. They must report if a minor is believed to be at
653 risk of abuse or neglect. The elder or staff member might hear about a
654 minor currently at risk and must report this. Or, they might hear from
655 an adult about his/her abuse where the abuser is still in a position to
656 harm minors. In either case, TFC elders and church staff, and TFC
657 employees must report this to the proper civil authorities.

658 Along with mandatory reporting, TFC is committed to pursuing best
659 practices for background checks and training. Member churches shall
660 ensure that rigorous background checks are performed for all elders,
661 church employees, and any volunteers who work with minors. TFC
662 churches also require in-depth training according to best practices for
663 its elders, employees, and those who work with minors. Additionally,
664 all TFC staff shall be similarly trained and vetted.

665 TFC sees abuse as devastating to the bodies and souls of the abused
666 and seeks to create environments where healing is fostered. Such
667 healing is often a life-long process that will likely involve many kinds
668 of care: medical, psychological, biblical counseling, Christian love
669 and discipleship, supportive church relationships, and varied practical
670 help.

671 TFC seeks to create churches that recognize the dual role of the
672 people of God to advocate for the oppressed and the victimized as
673 well as seek true justice that involves a presumption of innocence.
674 Unprosecuted abuse can cause massive suffering. Yet, hasty
675 accusations can damage lives in a real though different way. TFC
676 churches strive to appreciate the need to both forcefully deal with the
677 guilty and righteously protect the innocent.

678 6.1.3.2 TFC Churches Outside the US

679 The policies in BCO-6.1.3.1 apply outside the US as much as is
680 possible and applicable. It is understood that certain international
681 situations will make specific aspects of this policy untenable.

682 6.1.4 Best Practices

683 Regions and the relevant committees of the GA should create and maintain
684 guidelines containing documented best practices for church health. These
685 should include not only best practices for pastoral work but also best practices

686 for diaconal ministries and any and all ministries that should be a regular part
687 of the life and mission of churches in TFC.

688 **6.2 Pastoral Health**

689 6.2.1 Relationships

690 TFC will thrive according to the depth of relationships among its pastors and
691 church members. While formal organization and agreement are necessary, it
692 serves as a structure around which to build meaningful and, Lord willing,
693 lifelong relationships for the sake of Christ and his Church. Therefore, we urge
694 all TFC pastors to make it their personal goal to build strong relationships
695 around this fellowship of churches. These relationships should be strongest
696 among Cohorts and regions but should also exist across the entire
697 denomination and the various geographical and cultural contexts within our
698 fellowship.

699 6.2.2 Training & Mentoring

700 We value the training and mentoring of elders. We recognize that this training
701 begins in the early stages of a man's Christian life. We expect that the many
702 shared resources we have as churches will be helpful in these earlier stages of
703 elder development. We encourage each Region to develop shared curricula,
704 resources, and best practices for the development of future and present elders
705 in cooperation with any relevant committees of the GA.

706 6.2.3 Best Practices

707 TFC advances the ministry of elders largely through establishing and sharing
708 guidelines for best practices. These are not binding in any way but nevertheless
709 are extensive in the help they offer for the multiple situations and seasons
710 elders in TFC will face.

711 6.2.3.1 Repositioning or Removal of an Elder For Non-Disciplinary Reasons

712 There may be various situations wherein an eldership decides to either
713 reposition an elder to a different role within their eldership or to remove him
714 from the eldership for various reasons of team fit, competence, gifting, or even
715 due to budgetary or scheduling realities. Not all removal or repositioning of an
716 elder is considered disciplinary in nature, nor do all situations involving the
717 removal or repositioning of an elder involve character disqualification. All
718 eldership disciplinary situations are covered in BCO-8 and the RRDA. In non-

719 disciplinary cases, elderships should consult the Church Development
720 Committee and the relevant Recommendations and Requirements they
721 generate on the topic. Such removal or repositioning should ensure the elder is
722 well cared for in the process and has recourse to appeal to the JRC should he
723 believe he has been treated unjustly. Any elder removed for non-disciplinary
724 reasons who remains qualified as an elder and a member in good standing may
725 retain his ordination certification from TFC for at least one year. Only
726 individuals actively serving as a local elder in a TFC church may vote in a
727 Regional Assembly or in the General Assembly.

728 6.2.4 Accountability

729 There is a significant amount of help offered by the various forms and
730 commitments formalized in TFC. However, the ongoing relational
731 accountability of TFC may do more to ensure fidelity and fruitfulness than all
732 these formal structures. We, therefore, encourage all TFC elders to form vital
733 relationships among themselves that include regular confession, prayer, and
734 care for each other in the various temptations and struggles that come with
735 following Christ and pastoring while opposed by the world, the flesh, and the
736 devil. The Cohorts are an excellent context for this sort of ongoing
737 accountability.

738 **6.3 Evangelism**

739 6.3.1 Resources

740 Cohorts and Regions, as well as the relevant committees of the GA, should
741 develop resources and Recommendations and Requirements of best practices
742 that will help establish a thorough and ongoing culture and practice of
743 evangelism and outreach within TFC. Our trinitarian God's mission and gospel
744 compel us to be churches and Christians known for proclaiming and living by
745 the good news of Jesus Christ. This is lived out as we develop and share
746 various resources such as training, methodologies, and materials to advance
747 evangelism.

748 6.3.2 Cooperation

749 Cohorts, Regions, and fellow churches within TFC should regularly and
750 extensively cooperate in evangelism efforts. This should include exchanging
751 teams and individuals dedicated to evangelistic and outreach efforts. This
752 should include using gifted and trained evangelists to develop and lead efforts

753 among churches in a Region or Cohort or beyond. This should include
754 donating financial gifts to efforts among the churches.

755 **6.4 Church Planting**

756 6.4.1 Resources

757 The Regional Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, in cooperation with
758 the GA Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, shall develop and
759 disseminate the resources needed for healthy and vigorous church planting in
760 the regions.

761 6.4.2 Cooperation

762 Cohorts, regions, and the entirety of TFC should partner together to advance
763 church planting. This should include but not be limited to sponsoring
764 internships, sending church planters to other churches, funding the training and
765 development of church planters, donating to new church plants, and sending
766 members of the church to be a part of a church plant.

767 6.4.3 Processes

768 The GA Church Planting and Adoptions Committee shall develop and
769 disseminate Recommendations and Requirements for church planting. These
770 shall provide extensive detail for carrying out our church planting mission
771 together. These shall include detailed processes for church planting and how
772 the particular aspects can be funded and supervised in partnership with regions
773 and Cohorts.

774 A plurality of elders is the norm for churches in the New Testament. But for
775 the sake of advancing the mission with the expectation of soon establishing a
776 plurality of elders, once a church plant is established and incorporated with at
777 least one elder, it may apply for full status as a member church of TFC.

778 **6.5 Church Adoptions**

779 6.5.1 Resources

780 The Regional Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, in cooperation with
781 the GA Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, shall develop and
782 disseminate the resources needed for healthy and vigorous church adoptions in
783 the regions.

784 6.5.2 Cooperation

785 Cohorts, regions, and the entirety of TFC should partner together to advance
786 church adoptions. This should include but not be limited to reaching out to
787 candidate churches and pastors, including them in the various activities of our
788 association, guiding them through the adoption process, inviting them to the
789 various pastoral gatherings among Cohorts, regions, and the GA, and providing
790 funds for the candidate church to participate in various TFC activities.

791 6.5.3 Processes

792 The GA Church Planting and Adoptions Committee shall develop and
793 disseminate Recommendations and Requirements for church adoptions. These
794 shall include detailed processes for church adoptions and how the particular
795 aspects can be funded and supervised in partnership with regions and Cohorts.

796 Once a candidate church and its pastors have satisfactorily gone through the
797 prescribed process, it may apply for full status as a member church of TFC.

798 **6.6 Global Missions**

799 6.6.1 Background

800 TFC exists to help fulfill the Great Commission's call to make disciples of all
801 nations. We recognize that we do so alongside a long line of faithful and
802 fruitful churches, missionaries, and agencies laboring throughout the world
803 over many years. Therefore, we do not seek to operate independently or
804 originally in our efforts. We seek to cooperate with any and all churches,
805 missionaries, and agencies that will mutually benefit our efforts to fulfill the
806 Great Commission. We prioritize efforts aimed at planting viable indigenous-
807 led churches among the least-reached peoples of the world with the hope they
808 will become part of TFC or a like-minded association of churches.⁶⁶

809 6.6.2 Activities

810 Member churches should set apart a good portion of their regular budget to
811 support global missions among the least-reached peoples of the world. Elders
812 should encourage a culture among their churches of generous giving to this

⁶⁶ Unreached peoples are historically defined as those ethnic groups with less than 2% who are evangelical Christians. See Zane Pratt, "Here's What We Mean by Unreached Peoples and Places," <https://www.imb.org/2016/11/22/what-do-we-mean-by-unreached-peoples-and-places/>

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813 cause. Each Region should be active together in supporting strategic projects
814 and efforts towards advancing global missions. This might include sponsoring
815 and supporting sister churches in areas in close cultural or geographic
816 proximity to target locales and cultures. The Global Missions Committee shall
817 establish Recommendations and Requirements and funding avenues for work
818 in global missions.

819 **7 Trinity Fellowship Churches Commitments**

820 **7.1 Provisions for Initial Fifteen Months**

821 Until such time that the General Assembly deems appropriate, the normal time
822 requirements for introducing nominations, motions, amendments, and any other duties
823 of the Cohorts, Regions, and General Assembly may be waived at the discretion of
824 such bodies. This is given to allow for flexibility in implementing the normal function
825 of these bodies. *Confession of Faith* changes, BCO changes, and the nomination and
826 election of Committee members and chairmen may be performed immediately at the
827 appropriate meetings. During this time, implementations of Cohorts and Regions may
828 be delayed as needed. Additionally, the General Assembly may vote to include non-
829 member elders and experts as part of the various committees. Also, the General
830 Assembly may form ad-hoc committees or a committee-of-the-whole or ask certain
831 committees to assume duties not normally performed by the respective committees.
832 These temporary provisions are given in order to best facilitate the health and growth
833 of TFC in its early stages.

834 **7.2 Interim TFC Partnership Agreement**

835 These commitments are made as an initial and interim agreement for the first three
836 years of TFC. At the three-year mark, all churches in TFC will need to decide to
837 commit to a long-term agreement to continue as a part of TFC. Such an agreement
838 shall be prepared in time for all churches to process their decision at the three-year
839 mark. The following page contains the initial agreement.

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The Initial Agreement:

I, along with the eldership of my local church, sincerely receive and affirm the TFC Confession of Faith; and I further promise that if at any time I remain out of accord with this Confession of Faith, I will, on my own initiative, communicate these changes first to my fellow elders in my local church and, as necessary, to the fellow elders in my Cohort and Region.

I, along with the eldership of my local church, sincerely approve of the form of government and discipline of TFC as a wise and helpful application of biblical polity. I promise to support it as far as I am able and will only resign from this partnership for matters of conscience or persistent and serious incompatibility. I promise to honor any pertinent Recommendations and Requirements that have been ratified by the General Assembly.

I, along with the eldership of my local church, will strive towards contributing 2% of our church's general fund income toward the support of TFC-wide functions, another 4% of our church's general fund to regional functions, and another 4% of our general fund to mission work of our choice, beyond our local church, including regional and TFC-wide efforts in church planting and the global mission work of TFC.

We understand that this Agreement does not confer on any party hereto the legal right to or any interest in such executing party's property, personal property, intellectual property, employees, or responsibility or liability for such party's debts, claims, or liabilities. Entering into this Agreement is entirely voluntary, which means that nothing herein is intended to prevent any TFC member church from leaving according to the procedures given herein.

I, _____, do sincerely receive and subscribe to the above obligation as a just and true exhibition of my faith and principles, and do resolve and promise to exercise my ministry in conformity therewith.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Church: _____

869 **7.3 Terminating a Partnership**

870 7.3.1 Principle

871 We are an ecclesiastical union joined by mutual agreement on the importance of
872 genuine partnership and unity among churches. No separation of such a union should
873 be taken lightly or unadvisedly, but soberly, carefully, and only in light of strong
874 reasons of conscience or compatibility, and then only after earnest and extensive
875 efforts have been made to preserve our unity in the Spirit. There may arise by
876 necessity a time in which a local church for the reason of a change of doctrine or other
877 unforeseen compelling reasons can no longer continue to be part of Trinity Fellowship
878 Churches. Upon separation, Trinity Fellowship Churches has no right to the property
879 of a local church, and the local church has no right to the property of Trinity
880 Fellowship Churches.

881 7.3.2 Process

882 7.3.2.1 If a church is considering leaving TFC, its elders should contact the
883 Regional Chairman and discuss its reasons with him prior to reaching
884 a final decision.

885 7.3.2.2 If the local church, through its elders, decides to pursue separation, its
886 elders must notify their RA in writing of their decision of intent to
887 withdraw from TFC.

888 7.3.2.3 At least 30 days prior to withdrawal, the elders of that local church
889 shall appear before the Judicial Review Committee of their RA in
890 order to give reason(s) for leaving.

891 7.3.2.4 The Judicial Review Committee of that RA shall, for the good of the
892 local church and our union, examine in earnest the reasons stated for
893 leaving.

894 7.3.2.5 If the Judicial Review Committee accepts the reasons for withdrawal
895 to be valid, then the JRC will recommend to the RA of Elders that the
896 local church be commended to the Lord and his grace and freed to
897 leave without censure. Valid reasons include, e.g., a non-heretical
898 disagreement with the TFC Confession of Faith, a theological
899 inability to submit to the explicit mandates of the TFC Book of
900 Church Order, or a practical inability to participate in the partnership

901 of TFC.

902 7.3.2.6 If the Judicial Review Committee finds that the eldership of the
903 departing church is (a) heretical (i.e., its errors present a grave and
904 immediate threat to the spiritual welfare of church members), (b)
905 guilty of unrepented scandalous sin, (c) has engaged in blatantly
906 divisive and destructive behavior (i.e., explicitly making/condoning
907 charges against TFC members outside of the appropriate church
908 judicatories), then the JRC shall propose to the GA a censure against
909 the eldership stating the reasons why it believes the departure is
910 wrong.

911 7.3.2.7 If the Judicial Review Committee finds that an eldership is departing
912 for reasons which do not honor the gravity of ecclesiastical union, it
913 may propose to the RA the issue of a comment which neither censures
914 nor commends the eldership's decision. Under such circumstances, the
915 JRC and the RA are advised to exercise charity and restraint.

916 7.3.2.8 After hearing the Judicial Review Committee's proposal, the RA shall
917 determine, by a simple majority vote, whether to commend, censure,
918 or simply comment upon the local church's departure.

919 7.3.2.9 A copy of the commendation, censure, or comment will be sent to all
920 elderships in TFC for them to communicate to their congregations as
921 they deem appropriate.

922 **7.3.3 Appeals**

923 Any eldership may appeal the terms of separation, including the content of any
924 departure letter, up to 12 months after separation. This appeal will be handled as a trial
925 and be adjudicated by the Court of Appeals of the General Assembly of TFC
926 according to the *Recommendations and Requirements for Discipline and*
927 *Adjudications for Trinity Fellowship Churches (RRDA)*

928 **8 Discipline**

929 **8.1 General Principles**

930 Trinity Fellowship Churches are committed to obeying the Scripture's commands to
931 provide processes of discipline for health and protection within our individual
932 churches.⁶⁷ These processes are to be biblical, just and maintained with truth and
933 grace at every level (local or regional adjudications, member discipline, elder
934 discipline).

935 8.1.1 Church discipline is given by Christ to his Church to promote the glory of
936 Christ, godliness, and purity,⁶⁸ to provide a venue for the possible rescue of
937 members who have become hardened by sin,⁶⁹ and to provide justice,
938 correction, and protections between members during conflict.⁷⁰

939 8.1.2 At every level (local, regional, etc.), discipline within TFC is to be organized
940 and carried out in a consistent manner by ordained TFC elders as outlined in
941 the TFC *Recommendations and Requirements for Discipline and Adjudication*
942 (RRDA). Each church must ensure that there is full compliance in printed
943 words (e.g., church handbooks, policies, by-laws) and in deeds (e.g., actual
944 adjudications and church disciplinary hearings).

945 8.1.3 Before any disciplinary actions are taken, appropriate efforts to draw members
946 to healthy and peaceable interactions and reconciliation should be pursued if
947 possible (e.g., through mediation, etc., see BCO 2.3).

948 8.1.4 This section assumes that the laws of all relevant civil authorities apply and is
949 in no way intended to supersede or counteract such laws. Whether or not civil
950 law requires, all TFC elders and staff are mandatory reporters as outlined in
951 BCO 6.1.3.

952 **8.2 Reconciliation, Mediation and Conflict Resolution**

953 Biblical peacemaking seeks to lead parties in conflict to reconciliation and conflict
954 resolution that honors the unity and peace we have in the gospel.⁷¹ Biblical
955 peacemaking is one of the highest priorities for a Christian.⁷² An offended or injured

⁶⁷ Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-6:8; etc.

⁶⁸ 1 Cor. 5:7-8

⁶⁹ Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 5:5

⁷⁰ 1 Cor. 6:1-8

⁷¹ Eph. 4:1-3; Phi. 2:1-5

⁷² Matt. 5:23-24, 18:15-16; Rom. 12:16-18; Gal. 6:1; Phil. 4:2-3

956 party should not pursue prosecution of another Christian without first seeking biblical
957 reconciliation. If a formal process is required to achieve reconciliation, the parties will
958 agree to function according to the principles and processes laid forth in the RRDA.
959 Any party involved in a potential adjudication shall fill out the Checklist for Biblical
960 Peacemaking in Appendix IV of the RRDA prior to pursuing adjudication. In addition,
961 each church in TFC shall have a mediation and conflict resolution policy as part of
962 their church discipline policy. Local elders must instruct and lead their congregation in
963 the practices of church discipline and biblical peacemaking.

964 **8.3 Witnesses and Evidence**

965 8.3.1 General principles

966 All adjudications are to be carried along in the principles of truthfulness as
967 shown in Scripture, as in the eighth commandment: “You shall not bear false
968 witness against your neighbor” (Ex. 20:16). It is our Lord's commandment that
969 justice and protections are provided to all people at every point of any trial. In
970 any adjudication, the words spoken, witness's testimony, and evidences
971 provided that form the substance of any case must be established as true and
972 must be corroborated by other sources, keeping with the principle of “more
973 than one witness” (Matthew. 18:16; Deut. 19:15). Due to the corruptive nature
974 of our hearts, special attention must be given to maintain justice and truth in
975 the receiving of witnesses and evidences. One person's word is often as good
976 as another's, and therefore no individual is to be declared guilty on the basis of
977 a single testimony. Furthermore, we will assume all parties remain innocent
978 until proven guilty through due process.

979 In all proceedings, extra care must be taken to ensure that all parties involved
980 in the adjudication (plaintiff, defendant, accuser, potential victim, witnesses,
981 etc.) are treated fairly and are afforded all necessary protections and care
982 dynamics.⁷³ Victims of physical or sexual abuse are neither required nor
983 advised to meet face-to-face with their abuser.

984 8.3.2 Credibility

985 Credibility is the veracity which might be applied to the word and character of
986 a witness. When discerning a witness's credibility, the adjudicating elders may
987 take into consideration anything that might reflect on the witness's truthfulness

⁷³ Although not mandated for local adjudications, the processes for these protections are spelled out in RRDA 8.3.3 and 6.4.1, et. al.

988 in testimony. Their consideration might include the witness's relationship and
989 history with the accused and/or other witnesses, their quality of understanding
990 and insight into the matters on hand, their tone and demeanor while making
991 accusations, the tested quality of their life and standing in fellowship, and what
992 they seek to gain from the outcome.

993 8.3.2.1 Witnesses of Character

994 Extra prudence is required whenever the plaintiff or a supporting
995 witness is known to:

996 8.3.2.1.1 Harbor ill will or a vengeful spirit against the defendant

997 8.3.2.1.2 Be hasty in judgment or quick to accuse

998 8.3.2.1.3 Lack integrity

999 8.3.2.1.4 Have a reputation for dishonesty

1000 8.3.2.1.5 Be under discipline or a process of discipline themselves

1001 8.3.2.1.6 Possess a conflict of interest or would benefit from the
1002 defendant being found guilty

1003 8.3.3 Admissibility⁷⁴

1004 Witnesses and evidences that are put forward during an adjudication must meet
1005 one of the following criteria in order to be admissible:

1006 8.3.3.1 There are at least one or two other credible witnesses who have
1007 registered similar relevant and reliable concerns.⁷⁵

1008 8.3.3.2 There are at least two pieces of clear evidence produced that would
1009 lead to a just cause for the accusation to be admitted for a hearing.

1010 8.3.3.3 There is one piece of evidence that cannot be contrived and is beyond
1011 a reasonable doubt in the estimation of the Moderator and/or panel
1012 (e.g., video or audio footage, court records from a court of law,
1013 official police report).

1014 8.3.3.4 Evidence needed to determine guilt must be clear and convincing.
1015 This means that the guilt of the party is highly likely, though not
1016 necessarily beyond a reasonable doubt. This is the second highest

⁷⁴ See RRDA, page 82 for specific instructions to the process of admitting and evaluating evidence

⁷⁵ See Appendix 3 of the RRDA

1017 level of evidence used in establishing guilt.⁷⁶

1018 **8.4 Local Church Discipline**

1019 8.4.1 Elderships are to maintain local church discipline as shown in Scripture as a
1020 necessary and ongoing part of church leadership for the health of the church
1021 and for God's glory. Church discipline should be enacted whenever a believer
1022 is caught in serious sin,⁷⁷ and the steps of discipline (Matt. 18) should
1023 commence forward as the person demonstrates a clear lack of repentance and
1024 response to the intervention and care of the church (i.e., “not listening”). Each
1025 church should have an established and documented church discipline policy.
1026 Each church in TFC should provide biblical teaching on the biblical principles
1027 of church discipline. No person should be allowed to join a TFC church
1028 without agreeing to abide by and submit to their local church discipline
1029 processes. Each church should inform their members of the appeal processes
1030 for adjudications.⁷⁸

1031 8.4.2 Ordained elders are to oversee church discipline. Only ordained elders are to
1032 adjudicate in church discipline cases. In cases where there are not enough
1033 elders present locally to comprise an adjudicatory panel, the Region will
1034 supply the needed ordained elders.

1035 8.4.3 The steps outlined in Matthew 18:15-20 should be followed carefully and
1036 privacy protected for all involved. The initial steps are private, informal, and
1037 gradual. The discipline moves forward in the steps and becomes formal if the
1038 elders uphold the veracity of the charge(s), and the person continues to be
1039 unrepentant. The steps of church discipline should be as follows:

1040 8.4.3.1 **First step:** “Go tell him his fault, between you and him alone” (Matt.
1041 18:15). If a church member confesses to or is caught in serious sin or
1042 commits a sin against another believer, the person sinned against or
1043 who is witness to or has evidence of their brother's sin(s), in most
1044 cases, approaches the brother in private, bringing their evidence and

⁷⁶ Traditionally, there are four levels of evidence required to establish fault, from least to greatest. They are 1) substantial evidence, 2) preponderance of evidence, 3) clear and convincing evidence and 4) evidence beyond a reasonable doubt. See <https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/legal-standards-proof.html> et al for more information.

⁷⁷ Titus 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10

⁷⁸ See RRDA 5.1.3

1045 appeals to repentance.

1046 8.4.3.2 **Second step:** “If he doesn't listen, take one or two others along with
1047 you” (v. 16). If the attempt to privately exhort the accused brother is
1048 met with a refusal to listen (i.e., unrepentant refusal to comply with
1049 concerns), then the person who was sinned against or who witnessed
1050 sin(s) or has evidence of the brother's sin involves other church
1051 members (one or more), including the local church elders. If the
1052 elders uphold the veracity of the charge(s) and the person continues to
1053 be unrepentant, this process transitions from informal to formal
1054 church discipline. This step results in the widening of the circle of
1055 people involved to bring appropriate credibility to the concerns and
1056 additional loving appeals to the brother caught in sin. At times, this
1057 step will result in reconciliation due to repentance or due to the
1058 correcting of the misjudgment of the accusing party, as the “one or
1059 two others” involved bring increased objectivity.

1060 8.4.3.3 **Third step:** “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church” (v.
1061 17a). Should the unrepentant brother refuse to comply with the
1062 concerns and calls to repentance from the widening circle of church
1063 members involved in seeking to help restore him, then the broader
1064 church gets involved in a meaningful way to provide further
1065 objectivity and aid to the concerns of the persons' involved in seeking
1066 the accused brother's restoration. This third step will be some variant
1067 of a final call to the unrepentant brother from the church under the
1068 directive of elders.

1069 8.4.3.4 **Final step:** “If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to
1070 you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (v. 17b). The final step, known
1071 as “excommunication,” occurs when the person who has been proven
1072 as unrepentant through the first three steps of church discipline is now
1073 removed from the church and is no longer a member in good standing.
1074 That individual is to be treated as a non-Christian, as their behavior
1075 and their profession are inconsistent – they are bearing bad fruit like
1076 an unbeliever. Therefore, the church will relate differently to the
1077 excommunicated person, no longer offering them the Christian
1078 fellowship that being members together once held before the church
1079 discipline process was necessary.

1080 8.4.4 At every point during church discipline, the goal is one of merciful reclamation

1081 and repentance.⁷⁹ This goal should be demonstrated at all points through the
1082 tone and content of communication. Even if ending with excommunication, the
1083 process of discipline should always leave room for future repentance and
1084 restoration. It is the duty of elderships to decide when to readmit the penitent to
1085 the fellowship of the church.⁸⁰ It is the duty of congregants to forgive, comfort,
1086 and reaffirm their love for such a one.⁸¹

1087 8.4.5 If an eldership refuses to hear charges of a doctrinal or publicly scandalous
1088 nature and two other elderships file charges with the TFC Judicial Review
1089 Committee, the JRC shall commence an investigation that may lead to
1090 adjudications.

1091 8.4.6 Appeals to judgments rendered in church discipline hearings may be appealed
1092 to the TFC JRC and the Court of Appeals along the established channels
1093 provided in section 42 of the *RRDA*.

1094 **8.5 Discipline of Elders**

1095 8.5.1 Due Process

1096 At times there will be accusations made towards an elder within TFC, or an
1097 elder may be caught in sin or confesses to a serious moral failure. It is at these
1098 times that a particular process should be enacted that is commensurate to the
1099 office they fill. Scripture commands that we treat elders in particular ways
1100 under these conditions. For any accusation brought to an eldership concerning
1101 one or more of their elders, care must be taken in processing the credibility of
1102 witnesses/evidence in obedience to 1 Tim. 5:19, which states, “Do not admit a
1103 charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

1104 Local elders are to decide whether evidence or witness testimonies are
1105 credible, as it is only through the governing officers of the church that
1106 accusations are evaluated and determined as admissible. If there are no other
1107 corroborating witnesses or clear pieces of evidence provided, the accusations
1108 may be dismissed.

1109 Should an elder confess to serious sin or even be accused of such sins, either
1110 the accused elder or the other local elders shall immediately contact their
1111 Regional Leader and the Chairman of the Judicial Review Committee for the

⁷⁹ Galatians 6:1-2

⁸⁰ 2 Cor. 2:6-8

⁸¹ 2 Cor. 2:7-8

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1112 purpose of seeking counsel and possible aid in complying with the RRDA in
1113 the adjudication process.

1114 The care taken in processing any accusations against an elder is both to protect
1115 the church against wayward elders and to protect elders against wayward
1116 church members. A proper due process will balance both of these concerns and
1117 will require that:

1118 8.5.1.1 Accusations must be made within two years of the offense(s).
1119 Notwithstanding this requirement, any allegation involving sexual
1120 misconduct or illegal activity may be brought without timeframe
1121 limitation.

1122 8.5.1.2 The accused elder has the right to face his accuser(s) unless the
1123 charge stems from a minor.

1124 8.5.2 Grounds for Discipline of an Elder

1125 The grounds of the accusation must be upon a documented and serious breach
1126 of sound doctrine (as outlined in the *TFC Confession of Faith*) or an offense
1127 that would disqualify an elder from their office.⁸² See RRDA 6.5.4 for the
1128 outline of admissible charges.

1129 8.5.3 Results of adjudications

1130 Results will be one of the following: Cleared of charges, private rebuke, public
1131 rebuke, removal from office, church discipline, all as further outlined in the
1132 *RRDA*.

1133 8.5.4 Suspension of Elders

1134 Should an elder be accused of serious criminal or scandalous sin, the remaining
1135 elders may, at their own discretion, temporarily suspend the accused elder from
1136 his office and its duties with or without pay until an adjudicatory panel rules on
1137 the matter. In a case where the eldership decides to suspend pay, if the elder is
1138 ultimately cleared of the charges, he must receive his withheld pay in full. Two
1139 unaccused elders are required to approve this action. If there are not two
1140 remaining unaccused elders, the JRC will supply the necessary elders for the
1141 adjudicatory panel. In the situation where there is only one elder, and he is the
1142 accused, the Region will assume responsibility for the care of the church. The

⁸² Qualifications stated in 1 Tim. 3:1-8; Titus 1:5-9 and as described in BCO 8.4.1

1143 Regional Leader will coordinate that care. The financial assets of the church
1144 remain under the control of the local church officers or their delegates.

1145 8.5.4.1 Charges against an Eldership

1146 Should the actions or decisions of an entire eldership create grounds for an
1147 admissible charge (BCO 8.5.2), the charge may be brought by an individual,
1148 individual elder, or another eldership as outlined in *RRDA* 6 & 7. Additionally,
1149 persistent failure to uphold the requirements of the TFC BCO or the TFC
1150 Partnership Agreement is also a ground for charges against an eldership.

1151 Should an entire eldership be removed and their local church members desire
1152 to remain in partnership with TFC, they should consult the Chairman of the
1153 Church Adoptions Committee (information found at
1154 info@TrinityFellowshipChurches.com).

1155 **8.6 Judicial Review Committees**

1156 8.6.1 Appointment of the Judicial Review Committee

1157 The Regional Assembly will install a *minimum* of five elders to the Judicial
1158 Review Committee.⁸³ The JRC will provide the necessary adjudicatory body
1159 for all appeals and adjudications that rise beyond the scope of a local eldership
1160 and will provide counsel to local elderships in their own adjudications.

1161 Members of the Judicial Review Committee will serve six-year terms with no
1162 term limits. If an elder resigns before his term is up, the Region nominates,
1163 votes, and then appoints a replacement for the duration of the term, pending
1164 confirmation from the RA by simple majority vote.

1165 The JRC will be maintained as a minimum of five pastors in a Region,
1166 preferably from different churches, with each case heard by three members of
1167 the committee. Men are assigned to a case through a blind draw. An elder may
1168 be exempted from inclusion in a case for various reasons, from time constraints
1169 to conflicts of interest. If necessary, JRC members may be shared between
1170 regions serving on adjudication panels if approved by both regions.

1171 8.6.2 Powers and Responsibilities of the Judicial Review Committee

1172 8.6.2.1 The Judicial Review Committee should serve as a resource for

⁸³ See BCO 4.2.5

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- 1173 informal counsel to elderships walking through a 1 Timothy 5:19-21
1174 proceeding at the local level. This is to ensure that the procedural
1175 elements of discipline are followed.
- 1176 8.6.2.2 A local eldership should not publicly rebuke or remove an elder
1177 without the involvement of the Judicial Review Committee.
- 1178 8.6.2.3 In these instances, the JRC is not weighing in on the guilt or
1179 innocence of the elder but assisting in ensuring that a fair and just
1180 process has been carried out according to the procedures spelled out
1181 in the *RRDA*.
- 1182 8.6.2.4 The Judicial Review Committee will also serve as a body of appeal
1183 for church members who have been disciplined or removed from
1184 membership. The JRC must hear the appeal of any excommunicated
1185 member if it is made within the allotted time frame through the
1186 appropriate channels (See *RRDA* 42).
- 1187 8.6.2.5 If a charge is brought against an elder but is not admitted by the
1188 Moderator, the person bringing the charge may appeal to the Judicial
1189 Review Committee. The JRC will determine whether or not the case
1190 shall be heard by the local Panel.
- 1191 8.6.2.6 The Judicial Review Committee will be a place of appeal for any
1192 elder who is removed by a local Panel. The JRC must hear the appeal
1193 of any trial decision regarding an elder at the local level (if the appeal
1194 is made within the allotted time frame). This result will be a binding
1195 decision in which the elder in question is cleared of charges, privately
1196 or publicly rebuked, or removed from office.⁸⁴
- 1197 8.6.2.7 The Judicial Review Committee will serve as the original adjudicating
1198 body for the trial of an accused elder in the case where a local
1199 eldership is too small to adequately deal with the matter. In such a
1200 case, the TFC Court of Appeals would handle any further appeal.
- 1201 8.6.2.8 A local panel has the recourse of appeal to the TFC Court of Appeals
1202 should they disagree with any judgment by the JRC that overturns
1203 their prior verdict. However, the decision of the JRC should be

⁸⁴ Such decisions are binding by the authority of this partnership of churches. In TFC, where authority is delegated to denominational leaders, such as in the JRC, it is nonetheless a real authority within our partnership.

1204 enacted, even while the appeals process continues.

1205 8.6.2.9 When the JRC has the original jurisdiction in the case of an accused
1206 elder when the local eldership is too small to adequately deal with the
1207 matter, once their Panel renders a decision, the execution of that
1208 decision shall be the exclusive responsibility of the unaccused local
1209 elder(s). Should there be no unaccused elders, the execution of the
1210 decision shall be the exclusive responsibility of the JRC.

1211 8.6.2.10 Charges Against Denominational Leaders and Committee Members

1212 8.6.2.10.1 Charges against denominational leaders that generally
1213 pertain to their qualification as elders will be handled
1214 according to the usual chain of jurisdiction for an elder:
1215 local Panel, Judicial Review Committee, TFC Court of
1216 Appeals.

1217 8.6.2.10.2 Each committee will have specific agreed-upon
1218 responsibilities, policies, and procedures, including the
1219 circumstances that are appropriate to the removal of an
1220 elder from a committee (BCO 4.4.3 et al.)

1221 8.6.2.11 Removal of a Church from TFC due to BCO noncompliance

1222 Any church that willfully, demonstrably, and consistently fails to
1223 comply with the explicit mandates of the BCO over the period of two
1224 or more years may be removed from the partnership per the decision
1225 of the JRC following the trial procedures outlined in the RRDA.

1226 **8.7 The Court of Appeals**

1227 8.7.1 Candidates for the TFC Court of Appeals are drawn from the members of the
1228 Regional Judicial Review Committees. They shall be nominated by any three
1229 GA members. Nominations shall be submitted to GA members at least 30 days
1230 before meeting. They shall be elected by popular vote according to BCO 3.2.
1231 Members of the TFC Court of Appeal are Appellate Elders. These Appellate
1232 Elders will be appointed to six-year terms, with no term limits.

1233 8.7.2 The number of Jurists will correspond to the number of Regions. The
1234 minimum number of jurists shall be 5. If there are not enough regions,
1235 additional jurists may be drawn from any region to make up the minimum. The
1236 General Assembly may appoint additional jurists to serve on the Court of

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- 1237 Appeals on an ad-hoc basis by special meeting with at least a 15-day notice.
1238 Such jurists need only serve for the current adjudicatory issue. Any two GA
1239 delegates may call for such a special meeting in this case. Voting for ad-hoc
1240 Appellate Elders may be done electronically and remotely.
- 1241 8.7.3 When a case is appealed, three Jurists will be assigned to determine whether
1242 they will hear the case.
- 1243 8.7.4 When an appeal is heard by the TFC Court of Appeals, the Appellate Elders
1244 from the Region in which the charge originated will recuse themselves in order
1245 to prevent conflict of interest. Should there be insufficient Appellate Elders,
1246 Appellate Elders from the respective Region may serve if they did not
1247 previously serve as elders in the particular case. Additionally, Appellate Elders
1248 appointed per BCO 8.7.3 may serve.
- 1249 8.7.5 A blind draw will be used to assign three Jurists to a case.
- 1250 8.7.6 Responsibilities of the TFC Court of Appeals
- 1251 8.7.6.1 The Court of Appeals shall conduct all adjudications according to the
1252 *RRDA*.
- 1253 8.7.6.2 The TFC Court of Appeals has the right to review or not review any
1254 appeal of a case that has previously been decided by a Regional
1255 Judicial Review Committee. Any decision of a Regional Judicial
1256 Review Committee may be appealed up to the TFC Court of Appeals
1257 by either party to the decision, by an eldership, or by a Panel whose
1258 judgment has been overruled.
- 1259 8.7.6.3 In any case where the Regional Judicial Review Committee has
1260 assumed original jurisdiction for a local church case and conducted a
1261 trial, the TFC Court of Appeals must hear the case if it is appealed.
1262 The TFC Court of Appeals may not decline to hear such a case.
- 1263 8.7.6.4 The Court has the right to uphold or overturn the decision of a
1264 regional court and is not bound to grant another trial.
- 1265 8.7.6.5 Censure or Removal of a Region from TFC
- 1266 8.7.6.5.1 Circumstances requiring the censure or removal of a
1267 Region include:

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- 1268 8.7.6.5.1.1 *Persistent deviation from the TFC Statement of Faith*
- 1269 8.7.6.5.1.2 *Persistent divisive behavior (e.g., making or condoning*
- 1270 *charges against TFC members outside of the appropriate*
- 1271 *judicatories)*
- 1272 8.7.6.5.1.3 *Unrepentant sin on the part of the elders*
- 1273 8.7.6.5.1.4 *Persistent failure to uphold the TFC BCO or the TFC*
- 1274 *Partnership Agreement*
- 1275 8.7.6.5.2 Charges against a region must be brought by the lesser of
- 1276 either ten members or twenty-five percent of the General
- 1277 Assembly. Elders and elderships within a Region which
- 1278 register their dissent against the position or action of the
- 1279 Region will be exempted from censure or removal.
- 1280 8.7.6.5.3 If the TFC Court of Appeals decides to hear charges
- 1281 brought against a region, then after any necessary recusals,
- 1282 a blind draw will be used to assign five elders to the case. If
- 1283 less than five Jurists remain after recusals, then all of them
- 1284 shall try the case.
- 1285 8.7.6.5.4 The TFC Court of Appeals will render one of the following
- 1286 judgments: Not Guilty or Censure or Removal.
- 1287 8.7.6.5.5 If the judgment is for censure, the General Assembly will
- 1288 finalize or overturn the decision by a simple majority vote.
- 1289 8.7.6.5.6 If the judgment is for removal, a two-thirds majority vote
- 1290 by the General Assembly will finalize the decision of the
- 1291 TFC Court of Appeals.
- 1292 8.7.6.5.7 If the judgment of the TFC Court of Appeals is not upheld
- 1293 by a two-thirds majority, it will immediately initiate a
- 1294 simple majority vote by the General Assembly on whether
- 1295 to censure the Region.