

# **Trinity Fellowship**



## **Churches**

# **Book of Church Order**

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# Trinity Fellowship Churches Book of Church Order

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## **1 Foundational Commitments**

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

### **1.1 Confessional**

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

#### **1.1.1 Our Confession of Faith is Reformed.**

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

#### **1.1.2 Our Confession of Faith is Christocentric.**

Being Christocentric, we see Christ as central to God's plan of redemption, the Bible, our churches, our message, and our lives. Thus, we “preach Jesus Christ and him crucified,”<sup>2</sup> lift up the name of Jesus as the only path of salvation,<sup>3</sup> recognize that the Old Testament bears witness to him in all of its writings, see a right understanding of Jesus Christ as essential to interpreting the Old and New Testaments,<sup>4</sup> and delight in him as the very centerpiece of God's “good news,” the gospel that offers salvation freely to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. To be a Christian is to be in the deepest way possible “in Christ,”<sup>5</sup> and to be a member of the Church is to be a living member of “the body of Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

#### **1.1.3 Our Confession of Faith is Continuationist.**

Being Continuationist, we affirm that we now live “in the last days” defined by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on “all flesh.”<sup>7</sup> Along with all Reformed Christians, we affirm the necessity of the Spirit's work in regeneration and

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<sup>1</sup> Tit 1:9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor 2:2.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 4:12.

<sup>4</sup> John 5:39; Luke 24:27.

<sup>5</sup> Eph 2:6–13.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 2:17–21.

sanctification. Yet, as Continuationists, we also believe all the New Testament gifts<sup>8</sup> are available throughout the Church age. Further, these are not just to be believed in but earnestly desired for the building up of the people of God.<sup>9</sup> Such gifts are manifestations of God's power for the revelation of his glory and the great blessing of his Church - and draw the lost into the kingdom of God. Being both Christocentric and Continuationist, we seek to be *robustly trinitarian*.

#### 1.1.4 Our Confession of Faith is Complementarian.

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

#### 1.1.5 Our Confession of Faith is Baptist.

Being Baptist, we affirm that all those —and only those— who "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ" should be baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" by immersion in water.<sup>17</sup> Baptism is not required for salvation but is a sacrament required for obedience.

### 1.2 Connectional

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

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<sup>8</sup> Allowing that the NT gift lists are not exhaustive.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 12:7–11; 14:1.

<sup>10</sup> Gen 1:27.

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

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

<sup>13</sup> Gen 2:24–25; Eccl 4:9–10.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Tim 3:1–7.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Tim 2:12.

<sup>16</sup> Eph 5:21–33.

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

1.2.1 Connected through the Holy Spirit

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

1.2.2 Connected through Relationship

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

1.2.3 Connected through Developing Healthy Eldershops and Churches

Through conferences, Cohorts, and various other contexts, we are committed to creating healthy elderships of equipped, qualified, encouraged, and empowered men. We also seek to extend this cooperation, life, growth, and protection to the churches themselves (see BCO-6 for much more on “Fruitfulness” derived from our connectedness).

1.2.4 Connected through Our Foundational Documents

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

1.2.5 Connected through Mission

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

**1.3 Missional**

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

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<sup>18</sup> Eph 1:22–23.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor 12:20.

<sup>20</sup> Eph 2:19.

<sup>21</sup> Phil 2:25.

<sup>22</sup> Gal 6:2; 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:24.

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- 97                    1.3.1    Missional God
- 98                    Our mission is a dim reflection of the *Missio Dei*, “the mission of God.” God's
- 99                    mission is demonstrated in the Father sending the Son, and the Father and Son
- 100                   sending the Spirit.<sup>23</sup> In the same way, our triune God sends out the Church in
- 101                   mission.<sup>24</sup>
- 102                   1.3.2    Missional Disciples
- 103                   The Church plays a vital role in the fulfillment of the plan of God to reconcile
- 104                   all things together in Christ. Therefore, elders must seek to equip church
- 105                   members as disciples who engage Christ's reign in all of their varied
- 106                   stewardships and vocations.<sup>25</sup> Such disciples proclaim the gospel, live fruitful
- 107                   lives of good works in all of life, make disciples, and serve the poor.<sup>26</sup>
- 108                   1.3.3    Missional Churches
- 109                   In TFC, we seek to make disciples of all the nations by planting and building
- 110                   churches that plant and build churches in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup>
- 111                   Further, we seek to identify, equip, and send out church planters; and come
- 112                   alongside like-minded frontier missions efforts.

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<sup>23</sup> John 20:21; 15:26.

<sup>24</sup> John 20:21; Matt 28:18–20.

<sup>25</sup> Eph 4:11–13.

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

<sup>27</sup> Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8.

## **2 Church Polity**

### **2.1 Christ's Authority**

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

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

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

### **2.3 Membership**

Each church is a defined gathering of local believers who profess biblical faith in Christ and demonstrate this faith in the preaching of and genuine obedience to his word and in the administration of the sacraments.<sup>33</sup> They are gathered together by mutual agreement to serve as a local body of believers committed to stewarding the gospel, obeying the Scriptures, and advancing the mission of the church to make disciples of all peoples.

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<sup>28</sup> Matt 28:18; Col 2:10; 1 Pet 3:22 et al.

<sup>29</sup> Eph 1:22; 4:15; Col 1:18 et al.

<sup>30</sup> Col 1:18; 2 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14.

<sup>31</sup> John 19:11; Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet 2:13.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew 16:17-19; 18:15-20.

<sup>33</sup> "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).

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

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

## **2.4 Elders<sup>36</sup>**

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

Elders, overseers, and pastors are synonymous in the New Testament.<sup>38</sup> These three descriptions speak of one office that exemplifies Christian maturity, oversees the life and mission of the church, and cares for and directs the local church according to the word of God. The norm for elders is to serve as part of a plurality, not as a sole elder.<sup>39</sup>

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

Second, they are to oversee God's people and ensure their safety and success by guiding God's people into biblical truth and wisdom, leading them in proper biblical worship, overseeing the administration of the sacraments, resisting false doctrine and

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<sup>34</sup> Phil 1:1 et al.

<sup>35</sup> 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.

<sup>36</sup> 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.

<sup>37</sup> 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.

<sup>38</sup> Tit 1:5, 7; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Acts 11:30; 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim 4:14; Tit 1:5

<sup>40</sup> 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.



false leaders, and equipping and deploying God's people to jointly build up the body of Christ and perform its proper functions.<sup>41</sup>

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

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

## **2.5 Deacons**

Deacons are specialized ministers of a local church designated for service in particular tasks of ministry.<sup>44</sup> Their office requires the same type of Christian character as that described for an elder but does not require the ability to teach or lead like an elder.<sup>45</sup> Deacons do not hold the authority of an elder but nevertheless can possess significant responsibility in the life and mission of a local church. They organize and execute key ministries of a church. TFC allows for churches to hold different convictions about whether women can be designated as deacons. Notwithstanding, we do so committed to the biblical principles related to male and female roles being appropriately expressed in this office.<sup>46</sup>

## **2.6 Discipline**

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

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

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

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

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor 3:12-15; Heb 13:17; Jam 3:1.

<sup>44</sup> E.g., Acts 6:1-7.

<sup>45</sup> 1 Tim 1:8-13.

<sup>46</sup> E.g., 1 Tim 2:12; 3:1-13; Eph 5:21-33.

<sup>47</sup> Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5.

## 2.7 Denominational Leaders

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

We understand that God uses gifted men to serve in various functions beyond the local church for the greater good of the Church and her mission.<sup>49</sup> Some in TFC would understand such functions to be apostolic or even the functions of a modern-day “small-a” apostle.<sup>50</sup> Others would understand such functions as simply necessary for the health and mission of the overall Church and thus most naturally fulfilled by those with the appropriate gifts. We believe that the various committees and their chairmen within TFC are appropriate places for those so gifted and elected within TFC. We also expect that there will be multiple opportunities for such men to serve within TFC that do not require a formal role yet still are under proper biblical authority. All TFC roles, formal or informal, are under the authority of the elders of TFC, serve at their behest, and function as stewards of the charge given them by the TFC elders.

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<sup>48</sup> 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.

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

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

## **3 Partnership**

### **3.1 Scriptural Bases**

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

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

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

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

Therefore, commitment to denominational associations and partnerships must remain voluntary. But this does not mean such partnerships are trivial. Local churches can choose to cooperate at very deep levels to best ensure their respective and collective fidelity and fruitfulness in light of the truths of Scripture. Such cooperation can involve the oversight and care of denominational leadership and the employment of the God-given gifts of such leaders. No actions or decisions shall be made by any office, staff, or committee apart from the explicit authorization of the elders as documented in the BCO, the Confession of Faith, and official decisions appropriately ratified by the General Assembly (see BCO 4.3).

### **3.3 Voting In Our Partnership**

All denominational elections shall be by nomination and popular election by local church elders. Only individuals actively serving as a local elder in a TFC church may vote in a Regional Assembly or in the General Assembly. A quorum consists of at

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<sup>51</sup> 1 Cor 12:12–20.

<sup>52</sup> Acts 8:4-8; 11:19-21; 13:1-3.

<sup>53</sup> 2 Cor 8-9.

<sup>54</sup> Acts 14:27; 18:22.

<sup>55</sup> Acts 15:3; 20:17; Tit 1:5.

<sup>56</sup> Acts 15.

<sup>57</sup> Acts 11:16.

<sup>58</sup> 1 Cor 4:21; 12:28; Eph 2:20.

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

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

## **4 Forms of Our Partnership**

### **4.1 Cohorts**

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

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

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

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

The Cohort's prime goals are:

1. To build strong relationships among elders and church members in the Cohort.
2. To encourage, care for, and mentor fellow elders and elder candidates for optimal pastoral health.
3. To cooperate in church life and mission in a substantial way that best serves the Cohort churches.

### **4.2 Regional Assemblies**

#### **4.2.1 Overview**

Regional Assemblies are made up of the elderships from 5-100 churches in a given cultural or geographic context. The Regional Assembly is where the more formal functions outlined in this section are accomplished, such as Church Planting and Partnership decisions, Ordination Certifications, Regional Adjudications, and financial decisions. The more relational aspects of our

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partnership shall be the responsibility of the Cohorts rather than the Regional Assemblies. Churches in the Region should consider giving up to 4% of their general funds towards church planting and other efforts of the Region.

### 4.2.2 Regional Assembly Meetings

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

### 4.2.3 Forming Regions

Regions shall be formed at the request of any five GA members who want their churches to form a new region. The formation of the new Region requires a simple majority vote of the GA.

### 4.2.4 Regional Chairman

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

### 4.2.5 Regional Committees

As needed, the RA shall elect the necessary committee members. Committees shall have a minimum of three members. The Judicial Review Committee shall have a minimum of five members. These members shall be nominated by any three RA elders and elected by a popular vote (see BCO-3.3). Nominations need to be submitted to the RA 30 days before the election. The committee members are elected by a popular vote. They shall serve a three-year term. They may serve multiple terms.

#### 4.2.5.1 Regional Committees Chairmen

Each committee shall have a chairman who will serve to facilitate discussion, cooperation, and the accomplishment of the committee's goals. Each chairman must be an elder of TFC. Each committee chairman shall be

nominated by any member of his respective committee and elected by popular vote of the members of his committee. Each committee chairman may serve up to three years before requiring re-election. No chairman may serve more than two consecutive terms.

#### 4.2.5.2 Regional Planting and Partnership Committee

Regional Assemblies shall elect a Regional Planting and Partnership Committee that is qualified to process and oversee all church plants and new church partnerships in their Region per Recommendations and Requirements for Church Plants and Partnerships. Churches that are added to TFC will do so by following the processes in these Recommendations and Requirements, signing all required partnership agreement documents (BCO 7), and being appropriately reviewed and received by a 2/3 majority vote of a quorum of the respective RA. The Recommendations and Requirements for Church Plants and Partnerships are subject to the approval of the GA.

#### 4.2.5.3 Ordination Certification Committee

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

#### 4.2.5.4 Judicial Review Committee

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

#### 4.2.5.5 Regional Finance Committee

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

### 4.3 General Assembly (GA)

The General Assembly of Elders is comprised of one representative elder from each TFC church. Each representative must be currently ordained and actively serving as an elder of his church. It gathers to oversee our association. It meets annually and when called by at least 25% of the representatives. It shall choose a location that is most convenient for the representatives. Representatives who are unable to travel shall be allowed to participate and vote via teleconference. It shall have the following responsibilities:

## Trinity Fellowship Churches Book of Church Order

### 4.3.1 Formation of Committees

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

### 4.3.2 Confession of Faith

The GA shall oversee the Confession of Faith and any proposed changes to the Confession of Faith. Any changes to the Confession of Faith must be brought by a GA Committee or any five GA representatives. Proposed changes to the Confession of Faith should be submitted to the Theology Committee and Oversight Committee for feedback at least 150 days before the meeting of the GA. Finally, proposed changes must be submitted at least 120 days before the meeting of the GA and can only be ratified by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority of the GA.

### 4.3.3 Book of Church Order

The GA shall oversee the BCO. Any changes to the BCO must be brought by any GA committee or any three GA representatives. Proposed changes to the BCO should be submitted to the Polity Committee and Oversight Committee for feedback at least 120 days before the meeting of the GA. Finally, proposed changes must be submitted at least 90 days before the meeting of the GA and can only be ratified by a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority of the GA.

### 4.3.4 General Assembly Chairman

4.3.4.1 The GA shall elect a Chairman annually from their own number. The Chairman must be an objective moderator without conflicts of interest in his role. He shall not be a voting member of the Oversight Committee nor paid staff for TFC.

4.3.4.2 The Chairman shall be nominated by at least three GA members and elected by a popular vote (see BCO-3.2). Nominations for the GA Chairman must be submitted at least 30 days before the meeting of the GA and will be elected by the popular vote of the GA (see BCO-3.2).

4.3.4.3 The Chairman will moderate the following meeting of the GA using *Robert's Rules of Order* or an alternative set of rules approved by  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the GA.

4.3.4.4 The Chairman will serve as the point of contact for establishing the agenda for the annual meeting and any special meetings of the GA.

4.3.4.5 Any three representatives may initiate a request for a special meeting through the Chairman. The Chairman shall present the request from the representatives verbatim to poll the GA in order to ascertain whether there is



25% or more of the GA interested in a special meeting. The poll results shall be made available to all GA representatives.

#### 4.3.5 Motions and Reports

The GA shall vote on any motions or reports brought by any committee or any three representatives. All motions and reports must be received by the GA representatives 30 days prior to meeting. Decisions on these motions and report responses will require a simple majority vote.

#### 4.3.6 Contributions

The GA shall receive and manage contributions through the use of appropriate committees to promote the health and growth of TFC. All member churches are asked to give 2% of their annual general fund to this central fund, 4% of their church's general fund to regional functions, and another 4% of their general fund to mission work of their choice, including regional and TFC-wide efforts in church planting and the global mission work of TFC.

#### 4.3.7 Recommendations and Requirements

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

### 4.4 Committees of the General Assembly<sup>59</sup>

#### 4.4.1 Overview of GA Committees

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

#### 4.4.2 Appointments and Terms

Committee members shall be nominated by any three GA members and elected by popular vote (see BCO-3.2). All nominations for committee members must be received by the GA representatives 30 days prior to meeting. The number of committee members should be an odd number from a minimum of three up to whatever size is most conducive to their task. By a simple majority vote of the

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<sup>59</sup> 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.

committee, they may invite and include advisory members to participate in their meetings and/or work, however, advisory members are not voting members and may not be empaneled in any adjudicatory proceedings. There may be no more than 50% as many advisory members as voting members in any committee. Whenever the voting body of a committee changes for any reason, a new affirmation vote must be taken prior to the inclusion of any advisory members in further committee activities. Any member in good standing in a TFC church is eligible to be an advisory member of a GA or RA committee. Any other individual must be affirmed by a majority vote of the respective governing body prior to inclusion as an advisory member of a committee. Notwithstanding the limitations on the number of advisory members, committees are free to invite consultants to bring advice to the committee on a short-term basis. Temporary committee members may be appointed should a committee member not be able to complete their term. Temporary committee members shall serve up to a one-year term, subject to re-election. Permanent committee members shall serve a three-year term.

#### 4.4.3 Committee Chairmen

Each committee shall have a chairman who will serve to facilitate discussion, cooperation, and the accomplishment of the committee's goals. Each Chairman must be an elder of TFC. Each committee chairman, except for the Oversight Committee, shall be nominated by any member of his respective committee and elected by popular vote of the members of his committee. Each GA Committee chairman may serve up to three years before requiring re-election. No chairman may serve more than two consecutive terms.

#### 4.4.4 Chairman of the Oversight Committee

The Chairman of the Oversight Committee shall be nominated by any three GA members. Nominations shall be submitted to GA members at least 30 days before meeting. The Chairman shall be elected by popular vote to a three-year term. He shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. The Chairman will facilitate and coordinate the Oversight Committee's activities and serve as the President of TFC. As President, he serves as an important representative, communicator, and guardian of the foundational commitments, Book of Church Order, and Confession of Faith of Trinity Fellowship Churches, on behalf of the TFC General Assembly and its committees, and under their respective authority. He seeks to support and enhance the function of every element of TFC as a servant leader and spokesperson, under the authority of the elders of TFC as specified in the BCO. Accordingly, he will supply an annual review with recommendations to the General Assembly, on the faithfulness and fruitfulness of Trinity Fellowship Churches to their stated commitments, values, and practices found in the BCO, CoF, and related documents and practices.

4.4.5 Committee Reports

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

4.4.6 Permanent Committees

The following committees are permanent committees: Church Development Committee (CDC), Central Finance Committee (CFC), General Assembly Planting & Partnership Committee (GAPPC), Global Missions Committee (GMC), Oversight Committee (OC), Polity Committee (PC) and Theology Committee (TC).

Each of these permanent committees shall have members elected to a term of three years. The number of the respective committee members shall be 5 for the Church Development Committee (CDC), 3 for the Central Finance Committee (CFC), 3 for the Planting & Partnership Committee (PPC), no more than 5 for the Global Missions Committee (GMC), 5 for the Oversight Committee (OC), 3 for the Polity Committee (PC) and 5 for the Theology Committee (TC). Committee members shall all serve the GA in its decision-making authority. They may recommend budgets to be overseen by the Finance Committee and presented to the GA, and they may requisition and oversee staff as needed. Staff should be members of a TFC church. If they are not members, the respective committee shall present a yearly review and recommendation on the staff member to the fall General Assembly of TFC for a vote of continuing service.

4.4.6.1 Church Development Committee

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

4.4.6.2 Finance Committee

The Finance Committee shall coordinate with all other committees and staff and all motions involving financial expenditure. They shall receive proposals and work with the various parties to present a unified budget to the GA for

their approval. The Finance Committee's proposed budget shall be introduced as a committee report to be received, amended, and approved at the GA annual meeting.

#### 4.4.6.3 General Assembly Planting & Partnership Committee

The General Assembly Planting & Partnership Committee shall oversee Recommendations and Requirements for the Planting and Partnership Committees in the Regions. The committee shall also develop and provide the necessary resources to support healthy and vigorous church planting and new partnerships among the regions and beyond in TFC.

#### 4.4.6.4 Global Missions Committee

The Global Missions Committee shall oversee Recommendations and Requirements for the Global Missions work. This is a critical aspect of our mission. Its role is to provide clarity for our elders and churches. The target for this committee is the unreached peoples of the earth,<sup>60</sup> while the Planting & Partnership Committees will be concerned about church plants in areas being reached throughout the globe. They will research existing opportunities to help our local churches better steward the limited resources they have.

#### 4.4.6.5 Oversight Committee

The Oversight Committee shall work with all the various committees to assist the GA Chairman in establishing an orderly agenda for the GA annual meeting. They shall present their reasoned input in response to all committee reports. They shall ensure corporate ethical, legal, and financial compliance for TFC and serve as the organizational board for non-profit law purposes. They shall steward the BCO and by-laws. The President and the Oversight Committee shall communicate for TFC by representing established values, documents, policies, and past, present, and planned activities. The committee may requisition and oversee staff to help accomplish their goals. Any executive staff of the Oversight Committee must be hired with a job description and financial compensation endorsed by the General Assembly. Further Recommendations and Requirements for the Oversight Committee shall be ratified by the GA.

#### 4.4.6.6 Polity Committee

The Polity Committee shall oversee amendments to the Book of Church Order and offer their expert advice to the GA and its committees on any matter pertaining to the Book of Church Order. When a particular decision is required on the proper interpretation and application of the Book of Church

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<sup>60</sup> 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/>

Order, the Polity Committee shall make a ruling that shall stand until the next GA meeting. At the next GA meeting, the GA must vote whether to uphold or override the ruling. This shall be done by a simple majority vote. The ruling must be submitted as a Polity Committee report to the GA. The Polity Committee will also develop Recommendations and Requirements for itself as needed. These must be ratified by the GA.

#### 4.4.6.7 Theology Committee

The Theology Committee shall work to establish Recommendations and Requirements for Ordination Certification, including introducing any needed amendments or commentary. They shall also help steward the Trinity Confession of Faith by receiving and interacting over amendments, questions, or comments from TFC eldership, by proposing recommended amendments for the General Assembly, and by engaging and reporting to the GA on key theological issues related to the Confession of Faith. Additionally, the Theology Committee shall make recommendations to other committees related to key theological issues pertinent to TFC. The Theology Committee will also develop Recommendations and Requirements for itself as needed.

#### 4.4.7 Forming New Committees

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

#### 4.4.8 Removal of Committee Members

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

## **5 Fidelity of Our Partnership**

### **5.1 Confession of Faith**

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

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

### **5.2 Ordination Recommendations and Requirements**

We help ensure fidelity by creating agreed-upon Ordination Recommendations and Requirements that allow us to certify an elder's ordination. Elders are gifts from the ascended Jesus to local churches.<sup>61</sup> As such, it is the responsibility of local churches to recognize and steward the development of elder candidates. This includes all relevant training and experience followed by a methodical and clear ordination process. Ordination to the office of Elder is a local church function that is certified by TFC. All TFC elders will be certified for ordination by Ordination Recommendations and Requirements established by the GA of elders and their respective committees. These Ordination Recommendations and Requirements will be approved by a 2/3 majority vote of the GA and will become binding for all TFC ordination certifications.

### **5.3 Church Discipline**

Church discipline is an essential practice of the New Testament church that protects the purity of the church,<sup>62</sup> the witness of the church to the world,<sup>63</sup> and the salvation of genuine Christians.<sup>64</sup> Although a difficult function to perform, it is necessary for the good of the church, her mission, and the fame of Christ.

Each member church of TFC must have a clear and accessible policy of church discipline for all church members. They must also maintain an accurate membership roll that is available to every church member. Each church shall ensure members are aware of this policy and trained in its proper use.

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

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<sup>61</sup> Eph 4:7–12.

<sup>62</sup> 1 Cor 5:6–8.

<sup>63</sup> 1 Cor 5:1.

<sup>64</sup> 1 Cor 5:5.

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

## **6 Fruitfulness of Our Partnership**

### **6.1 Church Health**

#### **6.1.1 Cooperation**

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

#### **6.1.2 Mediation Assistance**

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

#### **6.1.3 Abuse and Reporting Recommendations and Requirements in TFC**

##### **6.1.3.1 TFC Churches in the US**

##### **6.1.3.2 TFC Churches Outside the US**

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

#### **6.1.4 Best Practices**

Regions and the relevant committees of the GA should create and maintain guidelines containing documented best practices for church health. These should include not only best practices for pastoral work but also best practices for diaconal ministries and any and all ministries that should be a regular part of the life and mission of churches in TFC.

### **6.2 Pastoral Health**

#### **6.2.1 Relationships**

TFC will thrive according to the depth of relationships among its pastors and church members. While formal organization and agreement are necessary, it serves as a structure around which to build meaningful and Lord willing,



lifelong relationships for the sake of Christ and his Church. Therefore, we urge all TFC elders to make it their personal goal to build strong relationships around this fellowship of churches. These relationships should be strongest among Cohorts and regions but should also exist across the entire denomination and the various geographical and cultural contexts within our fellowship.

#### 6.2.2 Training & Mentoring

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

#### 6.2.3 Best Practices

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

##### 6.2.3.1 Repositioning or Removal of an Elder for Non-Disciplinary Reasons

Circumstances may arise such that an elder chooses to resign from office willingly for non-disciplinary reasons (i.e., not due to serious sin or other disciplinary reasons). Additionally, there may be various situations wherein an eldership decides to either reposition an elder to a different role within their eldership or to remove him from the eldership for various reasons of team fit, competence, gifting, or even due to budgetary or scheduling realities. Not all resignation, removal or repositioning of an elder is considered disciplinary in nature, nor do all situations involving the resignation, removal or repositioning of an elder involve character disqualification. All eldership disciplinary situations are covered in BCO-8 and the RRDA. In non-disciplinary cases, elderships should consult the Church Development Committee and the relevant Recommendations and Requirements they generate on the topic. Any resignation, removal, or repositioning should ensure the elder is well cared for in the process and has recourse to appeal to the JRC should he believe he has been treated unjustly. Any elder who resigns or is removed for non-disciplinary reasons who remains qualified as an elder and a member in good standing may retain his ordination certification from TFC for at least one year but no more than three years. Only individuals actively serving as a local elder in

a TFC church may vote in a Regional Assembly or in the General Assembly.

#### 6.2.4 Accountability

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

### 6.3 Evangelism

#### 6.3.1 Resources

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

#### 6.3.2 Cooperation

Cohorts, Regions, and fellow churches within TFC should regularly and extensively cooperate in evangelism efforts. This should include exchanging teams and individuals dedicated to evangelistic and outreach efforts. This should include using gifted and trained evangelists to develop and lead efforts among churches in a Region or Cohort or beyond. This should include donating financial gifts to efforts among the churches.

### 6.4 Church Planting

#### 6.4.1 Resources

The Regional Planting and Partnership Committee, in cooperation with the GA Planting and Partnership Committee, shall develop and disseminate the resources needed for healthy and vigorous church planting in the regions.

#### 6.4.2 Cooperation

Cohorts, regions, and the entirety of TFC should partner together to advance church planting. This should include but not be limited to sponsoring internships, sending church planters to other churches, funding the training and

development of church planters, donating to new church plants, and sending members of the church to be a part of a church plant.

#### 6.4.3 Processes

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

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

### 6.5 New Church Partnerships

#### 6.5.1 Resources

The Regional Planting and Partnership Committee, in cooperation with the GA Planting and Partnership Committee, shall develop and disseminate the resources needed for healthy and vigorous new church partnerships in the regions.

#### 6.5.2 Cooperation

Cohorts, regions, and the entirety of TFC should partner together to advance new church partnerships. This should include but not be limited to reaching out to candidate churches and elders, including them in the various activities of our association, guiding them through the new partnership process, inviting them to the various pastoral gatherings among Cohorts, regions, and the GA, and providing funds for the candidate church to participate in various TFC activities.

#### 6.5.3 Processes

The GA Planting and Partnership Committee shall develop and disseminate Recommendations and Requirements for new church partnerships. These shall include detailed processes for new church partnerships and how the particular aspects can be funded and supervised in partnership with regions and Cohorts.

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

### 6.6 Global Missions

#### 6.6.1 Background

TFC exists to help fulfill the Great Commission's call to make disciples of all nations. We recognize that we do so alongside a long line of faithful and fruitful churches, missionaries, and agencies laboring throughout the world

over many years. Therefore, we do not seek to operate independently or originally in our efforts. We seek to cooperate with any and all churches, missionaries, and agencies that will mutually benefit our efforts to fulfill the Great Commission. We prioritize efforts aimed at planting viable indigenous-led churches among the least-reached peoples of the world with the hope they will become part of TFC or a like-minded association of churches.<sup>65</sup>

#### 6.6.2 Activities

Member churches should set apart a good portion of their regular budget to support global missions among the least-reached peoples of the world. Elders should encourage a culture among their churches of generous giving to this cause. Each Region should be active together in supporting strategic projects and efforts towards advancing global missions. This might include sponsoring and supporting sister churches in areas in close cultural or geographic proximity to target locales and cultures. The Global Missions Committee shall establish Recommendations and Requirements and funding avenues for work in global missions.

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<sup>65</sup> 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/>

827     **7 Trinity Fellowship Churches Commitments**828      **7.1 Partnership Agreement**

829 I sincerely receive and affirm that what is written in the Trinity Confession of Faith as  
830 a whole and in its parts is taught in Holy Scripture, either directly or by implication  
831 (with any approved exceptions). I further promise that if at any time I remain out of  
832 accord with this Confession of Faith, I will, on my own initiative, communicate these  
833 changes first to my fellow elders in my local church and, as necessary, the fellow  
834 elders in Trinity Fellowship Churches

I, along with the eldership of my local church, sincerely approve of the form of government and discipline of TFC, contained in this BCO, 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.

I 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.

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

855                      *Signed:*                      *Date:*

856 *Church:*

## **7.2 Terminating a Partnership**

### **7.2.1 Principle**

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

### **7.2.2 Process**

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

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

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

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

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

7.2.2.6 If the Judicial Review Committee finds that the eldership of the departing church is (a) heretical (i.e., its errors present a grave and immediate threat to the spiritual welfare of church members), (b) guilty of unrepented scandalous sin, (c) has engaged in blatantly divisive and destructive behavior (i.e., explicitly making/condoning charges against TFC members outside of the appropriate church

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896                               judicatories), then the JRC shall propose to the GA a censure against  
897                               the eldership stating the reasons why it believes the departure is  
898                               wrong.

899                   7.2.2.7   If the Judicial Review Committee finds that an eldership is departing  
900                               for reasons which do not honor the gravity of ecclesiastical union, it  
901                               may propose to the RA the issue of a comment which neither censures  
902                               nor commends the eldership's decision. Under such circumstances, the  
903                               JRC and the RA are advised to exercise charity and restraint.

904                   7.2.2.8   After hearing the Judicial Review Committee's proposal, the RA shall  
905                               determine, by a simple majority vote, whether to commend, censure,  
906                               or simply comment upon the local church's departure.

907                   7.2.2.9   A copy of the commendation, censure or comment will be sent to all  
908                               elderships in TFC for them to communicate to their congregations as  
909                               they deem appropriate.

### 910           7.2.3   Appeals

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

## 8 Discipline

### 8.1 General Principles

Trinity Fellowship Churches are committed to obeying the Scripture's commands to provide processes of discipline for health and protection within our individual churches.<sup>66</sup> These processes are to be biblical, just, and maintained with truth and grace at every level (local or regional adjudications, member discipline, elder discipline).

8.1.1 Church discipline is given by Christ to his Church to promote the glory of Christ, godliness, and purity,<sup>67</sup> to provide a venue for the possible rescue of members who have become hardened by sin,<sup>68</sup> and to provide justice, correction, and protections between members during conflict.<sup>69</sup>

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

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

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

### 8.2 Reconciliation, Mediation and Conflict Resolution

Biblical peacemaking seeks to lead parties in conflict to reconciliation and conflict resolution that honors the unity and peace we have in the gospel.<sup>70</sup> Biblical peacemaking is one of the highest priorities for a Christian.<sup>71</sup> An offended or injured party should not pursue prosecution of another Christian without first seeking biblical reconciliation. If a formal process is required to achieve reconciliation, the parties will agree to function according to the principles and processes laid forth in the RRDA. Any party involved in a potential adjudication shall fill out the Checklist for Biblical Peacemaking in Appendix IV of the RRDA prior to pursuing adjudication. In addition, each church in TFC shall have a mediation and conflict resolution policy as part of

<sup>66</sup> Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-6:8; etc.

<sup>67</sup> 1 Cor. 5:7-8

<sup>68</sup> Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 5:5

<sup>69</sup> 1 Cor. 6:1-8

<sup>70</sup> Eph. 4:1-3; Phi. 2:1-5

<sup>71</sup> Matt. 5:23-24, 18:15-16; Rom. 12:16-18; Gal. 6:1; Phil. 4:2-3



their church discipline policy. Local elders must instruct and lead their congregation in the practices of church discipline and biblical peacemaking.

## **8.3 Witnesses and Evidence**

### **8.3.1 General principles**

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

In all proceedings, extra care must be taken to ensure that all parties involved in the adjudication (plaintiff, defendant, accuser, potential victim, witnesses, etc.) are treated fairly and are afforded all necessary protections and care dynamics.<sup>72</sup> Victims of physical or sexual abuse are neither required nor advised to meet face-to-face with their abuser.

### **8.3.2 Credibility**

Credibility is the veracity that might be applied to the word and character of a witness. When discerning a witness's credibility, the adjudicating elders may take into consideration anything that might reflect on the witness's truthfulness in testimony. Their consideration might include the witness's relationship and history with the accused and/or other witnesses, their quality of understanding and insight into the matters on hand, their tone and demeanor while making accusations, the tested quality of their life and standing in fellowship, and what they seek to gain from the outcome.

#### **8.3.2.1 Witnesses of Character**

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

8.3.2.1.1 Harbor ill will or a vengeful spirit against the defendant

8.3.2.1.2 Be hasty in judgment or quick to accuse

8.3.2.1.3 Lack integrity

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<sup>72</sup> 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.

- 987 8.3.2.1.4 Have a reputation for dishonesty  
988 8.3.2.1.5 Be under discipline or a process of discipline themselves  
989 8.3.2.1.6 Possess a conflict of interest or would benefit from the  
990 defendant being found guilty
- 991 8.3.3 Admissibility<sup>73</sup>  
992 Witnesses and evidence that are put forward during an adjudication must meet  
993 one of the following criteria in order to be admissible:
- 994 8.3.3.1 There are at least one or two other credible witnesses who have  
995 registered similar relevant and reliable concerns.<sup>74</sup>
- 996 8.3.3.2 There are at least two pieces of clear evidence produced that would  
997 lead to a just cause for the accusation to be admitted for a hearing.
- 998 8.3.3.3 There is one piece of evidence that cannot be contrived and is beyond  
999 a reasonable doubt in the estimation of the Moderator and/or panel  
1000 (e.g., video or audio footage, court records from a court of law,  
1001 official police report).
- 1002 8.3.3.4 Evidence needed to determine guilt must be clear and convincing.  
1003 This means that the guilt of the party is highly likely, though not  
1004 necessarily beyond a reasonable doubt. This is the second highest  
1005 level of evidence used in establishing guilt.<sup>75</sup>

## 1006 8.4 Local Church Discipline

- 1007 8.4.1 Elderships are to maintain local church discipline as shown in Scripture as a  
1008 necessary and ongoing part of church leadership for the health of the church  
1009 and for God's glory. Church discipline should be enacted whenever a believer  
1010 is caught in serious sin,<sup>76</sup> and the steps of discipline (Matt. 18) should  
1011 commence forward as the person demonstrates a clear lack of repentance and  
1012 response to the intervention and care of the church (i.e., “not listening”). Each  
1013 church should have an established and documented church discipline policy.  
1014 Each church in TFC should provide biblical teaching on the biblical principles  
1015 of church discipline. No person should be allowed to join a TFC church  
1016 without agreeing to abide by and submit to their local church discipline

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<sup>73</sup> See RRDA, page 82 for specific instructions to the process of admitting and evaluating evidence

<sup>74</sup> See Appendix 3 of the RRDA

<sup>75</sup> 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.

<sup>76</sup> Titus 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10

1017 processes. Each church should inform its members of the appeal processes for  
1018 adjudications.<sup>77</sup>

1019 8.4.2 Ordained elders are to oversee church discipline. Only ordained elders are to  
1020 adjudicate in church discipline cases. In cases where there are not enough  
1021 elders present locally to comprise an adjudicatory panel, the Region will  
1022 supply the needed ordained elders.

1023 8.4.3 The steps outlined in Matthew 18:15-20 should be followed carefully and  
1024 privacy protected for all involved. The initial steps are private, informal, and  
1025 gradual. The discipline moves forward in the steps and becomes formal if the  
1026 elders uphold the veracity of the charge(s), and the person continues to be  
1027 unrepentant. The steps of church discipline should be as follows:

1028 8.4.3.1 **First step:** “Go tell him his fault, between you and him alone” (Matt.  
1029 18:15). If a church member confesses to or is caught in serious sin or  
1030 commits a sin against another believer, the person sinned against or  
1031 who is witness to or has evidence of their brother's sin(s), in most  
1032 cases, approaches the brother in private, bringing their evidence and  
1033 appeals to repentance.

1034 8.4.3.2 **Second step:** “If he doesn't listen, take one or two others along with  
1035 you” (v. 16). If the attempt to privately exhort the accused brother is  
1036 met with a refusal to listen (i.e., unrepentant refusal to comply with  
1037 concerns), then the person who was sinned against or who witnessed  
1038 sin(s) or has evidence of the brother's sin involves other church  
1039 members (one or more), including the local church elders. If the  
1040 elders uphold the veracity of the charge(s) and the person continues to  
1041 be unrepentant, this process transitions from informal to formal  
1042 church discipline. This step results in the widening of the circle of  
1043 people involved to bring appropriate credibility to the concerns and  
1044 additional loving appeals to the brother caught in sin. At times, this  
1045 step will result in reconciliation due to repentance or due to the  
1046 correcting of the misjudgment of the accusing party, as the “one or  
1047 two others” involved bring increased objectivity.

1048 8.4.3.3 **Third step:** “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church” (v.  
1049 17a). Should the unrepentant brother refuse to comply with the  
1050 concerns and calls to repentance from the widening circle of church  
1051 members involved in seeking to help restore him, then the broader  
1052 church gets involved in a meaningful way to provide further  
1053 objectivity and aid to the concerns of the persons' involved in seeking  
1054 the accused brother's restoration. This third step will be some variant

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<sup>77</sup> See RRDA 5.1.3

1055 of a final call to the unrepentant brother from the church under the  
1056 directive of elders.

1057 8.4.3.4 **Final step:** “If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to  
1058 you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (v. 17b). The final step, known  
1059 as “excommunication,” occurs when the person who has been proven  
1060 as unrepentant through the first three steps of church discipline is now  
1061 removed from the church and is no longer a member in good standing.  
1062 That individual is to be treated as a non-Christian, as their behavior  
1063 and their profession are inconsistent – they are bearing bad fruit like  
1064 an unbeliever. Therefore, the church will relate differently to the  
1065 excommunicated person, no longer offering them the Christian  
1066 fellowship that being members together once held before the church  
1067 discipline process was necessary.

1068 8.4.4 At every point during church discipline, the goal is one of merciful reclamation  
1069 and repentance.<sup>78</sup> This goal should be demonstrated at all points through the  
1070 tone and content of communication. Even if ending with excommunication, the  
1071 process of discipline should always leave room for future repentance and  
1072 restoration. It is the duty of elderships to decide when to readmit the penitent to  
1073 the fellowship of the church.<sup>79</sup> It is the duty of congregants to forgive, comfort,  
1074 and reaffirm their love for such a one.<sup>80</sup>

1075 8.4.5 If an eldership refuses to hear charges of a doctrinal or publicly scandalous  
1076 nature and two other elderships file charges with the TFC Judicial Review  
1077 Committee, the JRC shall commence an investigation that may lead to  
1078 adjudications.

1079 8.4.6 Appeals to judgments rendered in church discipline hearings may be appealed  
1080 to the TFC JRC and the Court of Appeals along the established channels  
1081 provided in section 42 of the *RRDA*.

## 1082 8.5 Discipline of Elders

### 1083 8.5.1 Due Process

1084 At times there will be accusations made towards an elder within TFC, or an  
1085 elder may be caught in sin or confesses to a serious moral failure. It is at these  
1086 times that a particular process should be enacted that is commensurate to the  
1087 office they fill. Scripture commands that we treat elders in particular ways  
1088 under these conditions. For any accusation brought to an eldership concerning  
1089 one or more of their elders, care must be taken in processing the credibility of  
1090 witnesses/evidence in obedience to 1 Tim. 5:19, which states, “Do not admit a  
1091 charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

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<sup>78</sup> Galatians 6:1-2

<sup>79</sup> 2 Cor. 2:6-8

<sup>80</sup> 2 Cor. 2:7-8

- 1092 Local elders are to decide whether evidence or witness testimonies are  
1093 credible, as it is only through the governing officers of the church that  
1094 accusations are evaluated and determined as admissible. If there are no other  
1095 corroborating witnesses or clear pieces of evidence provided, the accusations  
1096 may be dismissed.
- 1097 Should an elder confess to serious sin or even be accused of such sins, either  
1098 the accused elder or the other local elders shall immediately contact their  
1099 Regional Leader and the Chairman of the Judicial Review Committee for the  
1100 purpose of seeking counsel and possible aid in complying with the RRDA in  
1101 the adjudication process.
- 1102 The care taken in processing any accusations against an elder is both to protect  
1103 the church against wayward elders and to protect elders against wayward  
1104 church members. A proper due process will balance both of these concerns and  
1105 will require that:
- 1106 8.5.1.1 Accusations must be made within two years of the offense(s).  
1107 Notwithstanding this requirement, any allegation involving sexual  
1108 misconduct or illegal activity may be brought without timeframe  
1109 limitation.
- 1110 8.5.1.2 The accused elder has the right to face his accuser(s) unless the  
1111 charge stems from a minor.
- 1112 8.5.2 Grounds for Discipline of an Elder
- 1113 The grounds of the accusation must be upon a documented and serious breach  
1114 of sound doctrine (as outlined in the *Trinity Confession of Faith*) or an offense  
1115 that would disqualify an elder from their office.<sup>81</sup> See RRDA 6.5.4 for the  
1116 outline of admissible charges.
- 1117 8.5.3 Results of adjudications
- 1118 Results will be one of the following: Cleared of charges, private rebuke, public  
1119 rebuke, removal from office, church discipline, all as further outlined in the  
1120 *RRDA*.
- 1121 8.5.4 Suspension of Elders
- 1122 Should an elder be accused of serious criminal or scandalous sin, the remaining  
1123 elders may, at their own discretion, temporarily suspend the accused elder from  
1124 his office and its duties with or without pay until an adjudicatory panel rules on  
1125 the matter. In a case where the eldership decides to suspend pay, if the elder is  
1126 ultimately cleared of the charges, he must receive his withheld pay in full. Two  
1127 unaccused elders are required to approve this action. If there are not two  
1128 remaining unaccused elders, the JRC will supply the necessary elders for the

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<sup>81</sup> Qualifications stated in 1 Tim. 3:1-8; Titus 1:5-9 and as described in BCO 8.4.1

1129 adjudicatory panel. In the situation where there is only one elder, and he is the  
1130 accused, the Region will assume responsibility for the care of the church. The  
1131 Regional Leader will coordinate that care. The financial assets of the church  
1132 remain under the control of the local church officers or their delegates.

#### 1133 8.5.4.1 Charges against an Eldership

1134 Should the actions or decisions of an entire eldership create grounds  
1135 for an admissible charge (BCO 8.5.2), the charge may be brought by  
1136 an individual, individual elder, or another eldership as outlined in  
1137 RRDA 6 & 7. Additionally, persistent failure to uphold the  
1138 requirements of the TFC BCO or the TFC Partnership Agreement is  
1139 also a ground for charges against an eldership.

1140 Should an entire eldership be removed and their local church  
1141 members desire to remain in partnership with TFC, they should  
1142 consult the Chairman of the Church Partnerships Committee  
1143 (information found at [info@TrinityFellowshipChurches.com](mailto:info@TrinityFellowshipChurches.com)).

## 1144 8.6 Judicial Review Committees

### 1145 8.6.1 Appointment of the Judicial Review Committee

1146 The Regional Assembly will install a *minimum* of five elders to the Judicial  
1147 Review Committee.<sup>82</sup> The JRC will provide the necessary adjudicatory body  
1148 for all appeals and adjudications that rise beyond the scope of a local eldership  
1149 and will provide counsel to local elderships in their own adjudications.

1150 Members of the Judicial Review Committee will serve six-year terms with no  
1151 term limits. If an elder resigns before his term is up, the Region nominates,  
1152 votes, and then appoints a replacement for the duration of the term, pending  
1153 confirmation from the RA by simple majority vote.

1154 The JRC will be maintained as a minimum of five elders in a Region,  
1155 preferably from different churches, with each case heard by three members of  
1156 the committee. Men are assigned to a case through a blind draw. An elder may  
1157 be exempted from inclusion in a case for various reasons, from time constraints  
1158 to conflicts of interest. If necessary, JRC members may be shared between  
1159 regions serving on adjudication panels if approved by both regions.

### 1160 8.6.2 Powers and Responsibilities of the Judicial Review Committee

1161 8.6.2.1 The Judicial Review Committee should serve as a resource for  
1162 informal counsel to elderships walking through a 1 Timothy 5:19-21

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<sup>82</sup> See BCO 4.2.5

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- 1163 proceeding at the local level. This is to ensure that the procedural  
1164 elements of discipline are followed.
- 1165 8.6.2.2 A local eldership should not publicly rebuke or remove an elder  
1166 without the involvement of the Judicial Review Committee.
- 1167 8.6.2.3 In these instances, the JRC is not weighing in on the guilt or  
1168 innocence of the elder but assisting in ensuring that a fair and just  
1169 process has been carried out according to the procedures spelled out  
1170 in the RRDA.
- 1171 8.6.2.4 The Judicial Review Committee will also serve as a body of appeal  
1172 for church members who have been disciplined or removed from  
1173 membership. The JRC must hear the appeal of any excommunicated  
1174 member if it is made within the allotted time frame through the  
1175 appropriate channels (See RRDA 42).
- 1176 8.6.2.5 If a charge is brought against an elder but is not admitted by the  
1177 Moderator, the person bringing the charge may appeal to the Judicial  
1178 Review Committee. The JRC will determine whether or not the case  
1179 shall be heard by the local Panel.
- 1180 8.6.2.6 The Judicial Review Committee will be a place of appeal for any  
1181 elder who is removed by a local Panel. The JRC must hear the appeal  
1182 of any trial decision regarding an elder at the local level (if the appeal  
1183 is made within the allotted time frame). This result will be a binding  
1184 decision in which the elder in question is cleared of charges, privately  
1185 or publicly rebuked, or removed from office.<sup>83</sup>
- 1186 8.6.2.7 The Judicial Review Committee will serve as the original adjudicating  
1187 body for the trial of an accused elder in the case where a local  
1188 eldership is too small to adequately deal with the matter. In such a  
1189 case, the TFC Court of Appeals would handle any further appeal.
- 1190 8.6.2.8 A local panel has the recourse of appeal to the TFC Court of Appeals  
1191 should they disagree with any judgment by the JRC that overturns  
1192 their prior verdict. However, the decision of the JRC should be  
1193 enacted, even while the appeals process continues.
- 1194 8.6.2.9 When the JRC has the original jurisdiction in the case of an accused  
1195 elder when the local eldership is too small to adequately deal with the  
1196 matter, once their Panel renders a decision, the execution of that  
1197 decision shall be the exclusive responsibility of the unaccused local

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<sup>83</sup> 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.

1198 elder(s). Should there be no unaccused elders, the execution of the  
1199 decision shall be the exclusive responsibility of the JRC.

1200 8.6.2.10 Charges Against Denominational Leaders and Committee Members

1201 8.6.2.10.1 Charges against denominational leaders that generally  
1202 pertain to their qualification as elders will be handled  
1203 according to the usual chain of jurisdiction for an elder:  
1204 local Panel, Judicial Review Committee, TFC Court of  
1205 Appeals.

1206 8.6.2.10.2 Each committee will have specific agreed-upon  
1207 responsibilities, policies, and procedures, including the  
1208 circumstances that are appropriate to the removal of an  
1209 elder from a committee (BCO 4.4.3 et al.)

1210 8.6.2.11 Removal of a Church from TFC due to BCO noncompliance

1211 Any church that willfully, demonstrably, and consistently fails to  
1212 comply with the explicit mandates of the BCO over the period of two  
1213 or more years may be removed from the partnership per the decision  
1214 of the JRC following the trial procedures outlined in the RRDA.

1215 **8.7 The Court of Appeals**

1216 8.7.1 Candidates for the TFC Court of Appeals are drawn from the members of the  
1217 Regional Judicial Review Committees. They shall be nominated by any three  
1218 GA members. Nominations shall be submitted to GA members at least 30 days  
1219 before meeting. They shall be elected by popular vote according to BCO 3.2.  
1220 Members of the TFC Court of Appeal are Appellate Elders. These Appellate  
1221 Elders will be appointed to six-year terms, with no term limits.

1222 8.7.2 The number of Jurists will correspond to the number of Regions. The  
1223 minimum number of jurists shall be 5. If there are not enough regions,  
1224 additional jurists may be drawn from any region to make up the minimum. The  
1225 General Assembly may appoint additional jurists to serve on the Court of  
1226 Appeals on an ad-hoc basis by special meeting with at least a 15-day notice.  
1227 Such jurists need only serve for the current adjudicatory issue. Any two GA  
1228 delegates may call for such a special meeting in this case. Voting for ad-hoc  
1229 Appellate Elders may be done electronically and remotely.

1230 8.7.3 When a case is appealed, three Jurists will be assigned to determine whether  
1231 they will hear the case.

1232 8.7.4 When an appeal is heard by the TFC Court of Appeals, the Appellate Elders  
1233 from the Region in which the charge originated will recuse themselves in order  
1234 to prevent conflict of interest. Should there be insufficient Appellate Elders,  
1235 Appellate Elders from the respective Region may serve if they did not



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- 1236 previously serve as elders in the particular case. Additionally, Appellate Elders  
1237 appointed per BCO 8.7.3 may serve.
- 1238 8.7.5 A blind draw will be used to assign three Jurists to a case.
- 1239 8.7.6 Responsibilities of the TFC Court of Appeals
- 1240 8.7.6.1 The Court of Appeals shall conduct all adjudications according to the  
1241 RRDA.
- 1242 8.7.6.2 The TFC Court of Appeals has the right to review or not review any  
1243 appeal of a case that has previously been decided by a Regional  
1244 Judicial Review Committee. Any decision of a Regional Judicial  
1245 Review Committee may be appealed up to the TFC Court of Appeals  
1246 by either party to the decision, by an eldership, or by a Panel whose  
1247 judgment has been overruled.
- 1248 8.7.6.3 In any case where the Regional Judicial Review Committee has  
1249 assumed original jurisdiction for a local church case and conducted a  
1250 trial, the TFC Court of Appeals must hear the case if it is appealed.  
1251 The TFC Court of Appeals may not decline to hear such a case.
- 1252 8.7.6.4 The Court has the right to uphold or overturn the decision of a  
1253 regional court and is not bound to grant another trial.
- 1254 8.7.6.5 Censure or Removal of a Region from TFC
- 1255 8.7.6.5.1 Circumstances requiring the censure or removal of a  
1256 Region include:
- 1257 8.7.6.5.1.1 *Persistent deviation from the TFC Statement of Faith*
- 1258 8.7.6.5.1.2 *Persistent divisive behavior (e.g., making or condoning*  
1259 *charges against TFC members outside of the appropriate*  
1260 *judicatories)*
- 1261 8.7.6.5.1.3 *Unrepentant sin on the part of the elders*
- 1262 8.7.6.5.1.4 *Persistent failure to uphold the TFC BCO or the TFC*  
1263 *Partnership Agreement*
- 1264 8.7.6.5.2 Charges against a region must be brought by the lesser of  
1265 either ten members or twenty-five percent of the General  
1266 Assembly. Elders and elderships within a Region which  
1267 register their dissent against the position or action of the  
1268 Region will be exempted from censure or removal.
- 1269 8.7.6.5.3 If the TFC Court of Appeals decides to hear charges  
1270 brought against a region, then after any necessary recusals,  
1271 a blind draw will be used to assign five elders to the case. If  
1272 less than five Jurists remain after recusals, then all of them  
1273 shall try the case.

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- 1274 8.7.6.5.4 The TFC Court of Appeals will render one of the following  
1275 judgments: Not Guilty or Censure or Removal.
- 1276 8.7.6.5.5 If the judgment is for censure, the General Assembly will  
1277 finalize or overturn the decision by a simple majority vote.
- 1278 8.7.6.5.6 If the judgment is for removal, a two-thirds majority vote  
1279 by the General Assembly will finalize the decision of the  
1280 TFC Court of Appeals.
- 1281 8.7.6.5.7 If the judgment of the TFC Court of Appeals is not upheld  
1282 by a two-thirds majority, it will immediately initiate a  
1283 simple majority vote by the General Assembly on whether  
1284 to censure the Region.