

## Trinity Bible Church By-Laws

2026

### **Preamble**

In obedience to Scripture, we confess the purpose of our church is to glorify God through reverent worship, proclaiming Christ to the world, and building up our members through preaching the whole counsel of God and observing the sacraments of Christ.

### **Statement of Faith**

Our various creeds and confessions express an important part of who we are as a church. We confess and believe together with our fathers in the faith and our brothers throughout the world. We are baptized into their company as members of the same body, the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with them we eat of a common loaf and drink from a common cup. Their creed is our creed, even as their life is our life—one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. The elders of Trinity Bible Church therefore subscribe to these creeds and confessions, holding them to be a faithful witness to what the Scriptures teach, and as a means of identifying with the broader Church.

With this in mind, when this constitution refers to the Trinity Bible Church's Statement of Faith it is referring to the book of confessions which consists of: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, The Definition of Chalcedon, The Athanasian Creed, The Heidelberg Catechism, and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

### **Our Membership Vows:**

“Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in need of salvation by Christ, and do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving and resting upon Him alone as He is offered in the gospel?”

“Have you been baptized in accordance with His Word?”

“Do you pledge, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live as a follower of Christ?”

“Do you pledge to support the ministry of this church in its worship and work, submitting to its government and discipline, while pursuing its purity and peace?”

When the vows are presented to the head of a household, he will also be asked if he speaks on behalf of his household. When these vows are taken, the congregation will respond with “Amen” when they are asked:

“As a congregation of Christ, do you receive [this Christian/these Christians] into the covenant fellowship of this local church together with you, renewing your membership vows as you do so?”

Individuals may be received into non-voting membership. In special cases, individuals may come under our pastoral care without coming into full membership.

### **Absence of Members**

At the elders’ discretion, if a member is absent from church for an extended period of time and is therefore not involved in the life of the church, this member may lose voting rights. The elders will also pursue an understanding of the member’s reasons for absence, with the goal being the spiritual health of the member.

### **Release or Transfer of Membership**

If any member requests to be released to the care of another Christian church, the elders will normally release him with a blessing. If any member requests to be released because of disciplinary proceedings against him or someone in his household, the elders will delay acting on the request until the disciplinary matter is resolved. If members move from our geographical area, they are charged to find a new church home within six months. This time may be extended at the elders’ discretion. After this time is expired, they are released from membership.

When the circumstances surrounding the member’s failure to join a faithful Christian church are problematic, the elders have the option of applying erasure with censure. If the circumstances do not rise to the level of suspension or excommunication, or if they do not permit it, the elders have the option, at their discretion, of dismissing the person with a letter of admonition or rebuke, according to circumstance. This erasure with censure requires a two-thirds vote of the elders. If this threshold is not reached, then the dismissal will be a simple erasure.

### **Communicant Members**

Under the headship of Christ, the responsibility for administering the sacraments remains with the elders, who nevertheless respect the pastoral responsibilities of parents. Children in households who have not been baptized are recognized by the elders to be non-communicant members of member households. Children in households who have been baptized and have come to the Lord’s Table are communicant members of the church. Any baptized child may partake of the Lord’s Table, provided the parents instruct the child at each observation of the Supper, and the child can heed the instruction.

### **The Duty of Parents Regarding the Sacraments:**

We believe covenant children are part of the church family and ought to be treated accordingly. We desire to have covenant children present with the gathered community in worship and participate in the service as much as possible. We want to do full justice to Jesus' declaration that covenant children are members of his kingdom and bearers of his name (Mt. 18:1-14; 19:13). We want to receive covenant children into the family of God as fully as possible, giving them needed nurture and care in the covenant community.

This being said, Trinity Bible Church respects the parents' personal convictions regarding the timing of the sacraments with their children. Parents are free to choose according to their own conscience and understanding whether they would like to bring their child to the table on the basis of baptism (as soon as the child can ingest the bread and wine), or on the basis of a profession of faith.

Our only rule, in keeping with the Scriptures, is that one must be baptized in order to come to the Lord's Table. Heads of households are responsible for communicating their family's position to the elders if and when the need arises.

### **Electors**

In church elections, voting is done by household. Those households eligible to vote will be called elector households. For voting purposes, an elector household is defined as a household where the head of that household is a member in good standing. Independent unmarried members are also considered elector households for purposes of voting. Elector households may vote in the elections of elders and deacons. The elders will qualify elector households. Two weeks prior to any church election, a ballot will be provided. Elections will be conducted at appropriate times set by the elders.

### **Election of Elders**

A prospect for elder shall be identified by the elders. The elders and deacons will discuss the prospects, examine them, and approve those that they believe meet the qualifications of the office of elder. The elders will then present those names to the congregation for approval. If the nominee has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's book of Confessions or this constitution, he must inform the elders of it. All prospects for elder must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:2-4; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

Once approved, the nominee will work through a course of training on eldership under the oversight of the current session. His name will then be placed on a ballot for the electors of the entire congregation. Each ballot will provide the option of voting yes, no, or abstain.

If the candidate receives a two thirds majority support, the elders will ordain him for a two-year term through the laying on of hands and prayer. If any elector votes no and includes a reason for the no vote on the ballot, the elders must carefully weigh the scriptural merit of the objection before ordaining the elder elect.

At the end of a two-year term, if he desires to continue serving the congregation, the elder must be reaffirmed by a two thirds majority vote of the entire congregation. If elected, the elders will extend his ordination for an additional five-year term. If any elector votes no and includes a reason for the no vote on the ballot, the elders must carefully weigh the scriptural merit of the objection before ordaining the elder elect.

After the subsequent five-year term, if the elder wishes to continue his service, another church wide election will occur. If in this election, the candidate receives a three quarters majority of the congregational votes cast, the elders will extend his ordination for life. If any elector votes no and includes a reason for the no vote on the ballot, the elders must carefully weigh the scriptural merit of the objection and meet as necessary with the electors who cast the no votes. If these conditions are met, the elders will extend the parish elder's ordination to a life-term through laying on of hands and prayer. If events warrant it, during an elder's term of office, the session may grant a leave of absence for a length of time specified at the time of the leave. If the leave of absence coincides with an elder election to renew or extend his term of service, his election may be postponed until the leave of absence is concluded.

### **Election of Deacons**

Deacon prospects shall also be identified by the elders. Once nominated, a candidate for deacon will be included by the deacons in their work in order to prove his fitness for office (1 Tim. 3:10).

When in their judgment, the candidate has demonstrated this, the deacons will make a recommendation to the elders. If, in the judgment of the elders, the candidate is ready to serve as a deacon, the elders will then present those names to the congregation for approval. If approved by a two-thirds majority vote, the elders will ordain him through laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6).

When ordained, the elder or deacon will vow:

“As God is my witness, I solemnly vow that I will serve this church faithfully as a servant of Christ, and will maintain godly order in my life and my household as the Word of God requires.”

Once ordained, the deacon will serve an initial 2 year term, at the end of that first term the diaconate should review his work, and then make a recommendation to the session regarding whether he should be put forward for a congregational election to a 5 year term. This process should be repeated at the end of the 5 year term, for election to a life term. At the end of either the 2 or 5 year term, if either the deacon or the session determines he should not continue, there is no need to resign, his term as a church officer simply lapses/expires.

### **Duties of Elders**

Under Christ, the authority of the local church is the board of elders or presbyters in session. The elders are collectively responsible for ruling/shepherding (1 Pet. 5:1–2); equipping (Eph. 4:11–12); prayer/fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1–3); teaching/preaching (1 Tim. 5:17); administering baptism and the Lord’s Table (Matt. 28:19–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–26); administering church discipline and restoration (1 Cor. 5:1–5), and visiting the sick (Jas. 5:14–15).

The elders are responsible to delegate responsibilities to the deacons, hire and fire church staff, define responsibilities for church staff, delegate responsibilities to the staff of subordinate ministries, and approve the annual budget. The elders also commission or license ministerial students, and oversee the course of their training for the eldership. Under the guidance and oversight of the elders, such men may perform all the various ministerial functions of elders, participation in the rule of the church excepted.

Elder business will be conducted at meetings called for the purpose. In order to establish a quorum for regular business, at least half of the active elders must be present; for votes requiring a four-fifths majority, at least three-quarters of the active elders must be present in order for quorum to be established. The elders will rotate the responsibility of chairing meetings, and will appoint a secretary to record minutes. Individual elders are responsible for those duties delegated to them by the elders in session, as recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts, abilities, and desires.

### **Duties of Deacons**

Under the general oversight of the elders, the deacons manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church (Acts 6:2-4). Such responsibilities may include the following: preparing and administering the annual budget, building maintenance, deacon's fund, fellowship meals, administrative review of subordinate ministries, preparation of communion elements, and office support.

### **Resignation of Elders or Deacons**

If an elder or deacon desires to resign or take a leave of absence, he will present a letter to the elders. At the first appropriate monthly household meeting, the elders will notify the men of the church of their receipt of the letter. If the desire of the elder or deacon concerned is unchanged by the following full session meeting, the elders will issue a statement accepting the resignation, or approving the leave of absence. If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal irregularity, the resignation will not be a substitute for any appropriate biblical discipline. Leaves of absence will not be granted as a form of discipline.

### **Removal of Elders, Deacons, and Ministers**

If a church officer believes himself to be qualified to continue in office, but two or three believers hold that he is disqualified, these two or three witnesses should request a special session of the elder board where they would be allowed to present their case (1 Tim. 5:19). If the elders decide that the case has merit, with a four-fifths majority, that church officer, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to the correction, will be rebuked in the presence of the heads of households (1 Tim. 5:20), or will be removed from the office of elder or deacon (as the case may be) (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), or both.

### **Church Discipline**

The ordinary course of discipline is informal. Members are encouraged to self-discipline, overlooking the failings of others in love (1 Pet. 4:8), and encouraging other members to covenant faithfulness (Matt. 18:15).

Formal church discipline is applied through the formal action and a four-fifths majority of the elders. Except in cases of scandal requiring immediate action, the pattern of church discipline will generally include formal private admonishment by two or three (Matt. 18:16), formal public admonishment and suspension from the Supper (2 Thess. 3:14-15), and a formal hearing which may result in excommunication (Matt. 18:17).

**Dissolution:**

In the event this church disbands, all of its assets and liabilities will be offered as a gift to the Burnet-Llano Baptist Association.

**Amendments**

The Trinity Bible Church's Confession of Faith and Constitution may be amended through a four-fifths majority vote of the elders. The proposed change will be made available to the congregation, and after the elders have sought due consultation with the heads of households of the church at a heads of households meeting, the amendment may be confirmed at the next full session meeting of the elders.

We confess that this constitution is a fallible work of fallible men and may be set aside (with the Statement of Faith excepted) without the process of amendment by the judgment of the elders, decided by a four-fifths majority vote. However, if obedience to Scripture requires it, such exceptions should be presented to the heads of households as amendments to this constitution.