

Trinity Fellowship



Churches

Book of Church Order

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Trinity Fellowship Churches Book of Church Order

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43 **1 Foundational Commitments**

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

47 **1.1 Confessional**

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

52 1.1.1 Our Confession of Faith is Reformed.

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

61 1.1.2 Our Confession of Faith is Christocentric.

62 Being Christocentric, we see Christ as central to God’s plan of redemption,
63 the Bible, our churches, our message, and our lives. Thus, we “preach Jesus
64 Christ and him crucified,”² lift up the name of Jesus as the only path of
65 salvation,³ recognize that the Old Testament bears witness to him in all of its
66 writings, see a right understanding of Jesus Christ as essential to interpreting
67 the Old and New Testaments,⁴ and delight in him as the very centerpiece of
68 God’s “good news,” the gospel that offers salvation freely to all who believe
69 in the Lord Jesus Christ. To be a Christian is to be in the deepest way possible

¹ Tit 1:9.

² 1 Cor 2:2.

³ Acts 4:12.

⁴ John 5:39; Luke 24:27.

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70 “in Christ,”⁵ and to be a member of the Church is to be a living member of
71 “the body of Christ.”⁶

72 1.1.3 Our Confession of Faith is Continuationist.

73 Being Continuationist, we affirm that we now live “in the last days” defined by
74 the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on “all flesh.”⁷ Along with all Reformed
75 Christians, we affirm the necessity of the Spirit’s work in regeneration and
76 sanctification. Yet, as Continuationists, we also believe all the New Testament
77 gifts⁸ are available throughout the Church age. Further, these are not just to be
78 believed in but earnestly desired for the building up of the people of God.⁹
79 Such gifts are manifestations of God’s power for the revelation of his glory and
80 the great blessing of his Church—and draw the lost into the kingdom of God.
81 Being both Christocentric and Continuationist, we seek to be *robustly*
82 *trinitarian*.

83 1.1.4 Our Confession of Faith is Complementarian.

84 Being Complementarian, we affirm only two genders in God’s created order
85 for humanity, male and female, both made “in the image of God.”¹⁰ These two
86 genders possess differing but complementary roles in the family and in the
87 church. In the family, the husband is the head and called to sacrificially love
88 and honor his wife.¹¹ The wife is the suitable helper and called to love and
89 submit to him.¹² The two are called to energetically support each other.¹³ In
90 the church, elders are to be male,¹⁴ and Scripture says a woman is not “to
91 teach or to exercise authority over a man.”¹⁵ On deacons and gender, see
92 BCO-2.5. Gender roles are never to be used as a basis for affirming any kind

⁵ Eph 2:6–13.

⁶ 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12.

⁷ Acts 2:17–21.

⁸ Allowing that the NT gift lists are not exhaustive.

⁹ 1 Cor 12:7–11; 14:1.

¹⁰ Gen 1:27.

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

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

¹³ Gen 2:24–25; Eccl 4:9–10.

¹⁴ 1 Tim 3:1–7.

¹⁵ 1 Tim 2:12.

93 of superiority or inferiority but are to be a picture of a unity-in-diversity and
94 diversity-in-unity that glorifies our Creator and becomes a vivid display of the
95 Church and her Savior.¹⁶

96 1.1.5 Our Confession of Faith is Baptist.

97 Being Baptist, we affirm that all who “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ”
98 should be baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy
99 Spirit” by immersion in water.¹⁷ Baptism is not required for salvation but is a
100 sacrament required for obedience.

101 1.2 Connectional

102 We believe it is healthy, strategic and safe for a church to be inter-dependent and
103 disconnected from other congregations. We are, therefore, a fellowship of
104 interconnected churches united in the Holy Spirit and committed to building
105 relationships, developing healthy elderships and churches, adhering to our
106 foundational documents, and pursuing mission.

107 1.2.1 Connected through the Holy Spirit

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

112 1.2.2 Connected through Relationship

113 This ecclesiastical and organizational union is to be mirrored in committed
114 and God-honoring relationships consistent with what it means to be a part of
115 the household of God.²⁰ We want sincerely and affectionately to regard one
116 another as brothers and sisters in Christ and fellow workers and fellow
117 soldiers and even be ministers to one another’s needs.²¹ As we live out our
118 Christian lives, we desire to bear one another’s burdens and build one another

¹⁶ Eph 5:21–33.

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

¹⁸ Eph 1:22–23.

¹⁹ 1 Cor 12:20.

²⁰ Eph 2:19.

²¹ Phil 2:25.

119 up and stir up one another to love and good works.²²

120 1.2.3 Connected through Developing Healthy Elderships and Churches

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

126 1.2.4 Connected through Our Foundational Documents

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

131 1.2.5 Connected through Mission

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

136 **1.3 Missional**

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

139 1.3.1 Missional God

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

143 1.3.2 Missional Disciples

144 The Church plays a vital role in the fulfillment of the plan of God to reconcile all

²² Gal 6:2; 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:24.

²³ John 20:21; 15:26.

²⁴ John 20:21; Matt 28:18–20.

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145 things together in Christ. Therefore, elders must seek to equip church members as
146 disciples who engage Christ's reign in all of their varied stewardships and vocations.²⁵
147 Such disciples proclaim the gospel, live fruitful lives of good works in all of life, make
148 disciples, and serve the poor.²⁶

149 1.3.3 Missional Churches

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

²⁵ Eph 4:11–13.

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

²⁷ Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8.

154 **2 Church Polity**

155 **2.1 Christ's Authority**

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

162 **2.2 The Nature and Context of Church Authority**

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

176 **2.3 Membership**

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

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

²⁹ Eph 1:22; 4:15; Col 1:18 et al.

³⁰ Col 1:18; 2 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14.

³¹ John 19:11; Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet 2:13.

³² Matthew 16:17-19; 18:15-20.

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

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

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

198 **2.4 Elders³⁶**

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

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

³⁴ Phil 1:1 et al.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

222 **2.5 Deacons**

223 Deacons are specialized ministers of a local church designated for service in particular
224 tasks of ministry.⁴⁴ Their office requires the same type of Christian character as that
225 described for an elder but does not require the ability to teach or lead like an elder.⁴⁵

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

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

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

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

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

⁴³ 1 Cor 3:12-15; Heb 13:17; Jam 3:1.

⁴⁴ E.g., Acts 6:1-7.

⁴⁵ 1 Tim 1:8-13.

226 Deacons do not hold the authority of an elder but nevertheless can possess significant
227 responsibility in the life and mission of a local church. They organize and execute key
228 ministries of a church. TFC allows for churches to hold different convictions about
229 whether women can be designated as deacons. Notwithstanding, we do so committed
230 to the biblical principles related to male and female roles being appropriately
231 expressed in this office.⁴⁶

232 **2.6 Discipline**

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

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

244 **2.7 Extra-Local Leaders**

245 In order for our local churches to thrive and remain faithful, these churches delegate
246 certain authority to extra-local leaders and structures within TFC. This stewardship
247 gives extra-local leaders and structures the right to do certain things within our
248 denomination such as adjudicate charges against elders, censure elderships as needed,
249 coordinate mission, approve ordinations, and certain other functions articulated in the
250 BCO. Such extra-local leaders and structures do not hold any church authority apart
251 from that properly assigned to them from local church elders.⁴⁸

252 We understand that God uses gifted men to serve in various functions beyond the local

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

⁴⁷ Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5.

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

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

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

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

263 **3 Partnership**

264 **3.1 Scriptural Bases**

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

273 **3.2 The Nature and Extent of Our Partnership**

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

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

283 Therefore, commitment to extra-local associations and partnerships must remain
284 voluntary. But this does not mean such partnerships are trivial. Local churches can
285 choose to cooperate at very deep levels to best ensure their respective and collective
286 fidelity and fruitfulness in light of the truths of Scripture. Such cooperation can

⁵¹ 1 Cor 12:12–20.

⁵² Acts 8:4-8; 11:19-21; 13:1-3.

⁵³ 2 Cor 8-9.

⁵⁴ Acts 14:27; 18:22.

⁵⁵ Acts 15:3; 20:17; Tit 1:5.

⁵⁶ Acts 15.

⁵⁷ Acts 11:16.

⁵⁸ 1 Cor 4:21; 12:28; Eph 2:20.

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287 involve the oversight and care of extra-local leadership and employment of the God-
288 given gifts of such leaders. No actions or decisions shall be made by any office, staff,
289 or committee apart from the explicit authorization of the elders as documented in the
290 BCO, the Confession of Faith, and official decisions appropriately ratified by the
291 General Assembly (see BCO 4.3).

292 Accordingly, all elections shall be by nomination and popular election by local church
293 elders. When multiple seats are being filled, this popular vote shall require a minimum
294 of 25% of a quorum of the respective electing body. When one office is being filled,
295 the threshold shall be a simple majority. Runoffs may be necessary. All popular votes
296 in this BCO require this same approach. All terms shall commence at the beginning of
297 the next calendar year unless indicated otherwise. If there are more than a majority of
298 committee members who have the same term lengths, they must cast lots to stagger
299 their terms by plus or minus one year, so that no more than half of them will expire
300 simultaneously.

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

303 **4 Forms of Our Partnership**

304 **4.1 Cohorts**

305 The basic building block for TFC is a Cohort. Cohorts are 2-20 churches that agree to
306 cooperate together for mutual fidelity and fruitfulness. They can be formed along
307 geographic, cultural, or relational lines.

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

312 Every year, the Cohort shall elect one of their pastors to serve as chairman. Any two
313 Cohort pastors can nominate a pastor to fill this role. The chairman is elected by a
314 popular vote. He may serve multiple terms. The chairman will help to facilitate the
315 function of the Cohort through communication, organization, and example. The
316 Cohort churches should consider how to best support the chairman in his efforts,
317 including financial compensation.

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

329 The Cohort's prime goals are:

- 330 1. To build strong relationships among pastors and church members in the Cohort.
- 331 2. To encourage, care for, and mentor fellow pastors and pastoral candidates for
332 optimal pastoral health.
- 333 3. To cooperate in church life and mission in a substantial way that best serves the
334 Cohort churches.

335 **4.2 Regional Assemblies**

336 4.2.1 Overview

337 Regional Assemblies (RA) consist of duly ordained pastors from 5-100
338 churches in a given cultural or geographic context. The Regional Assembly is
339 where the more formal functions outlined in this section are accomplished
340 such as Church Planting and Adoption decisions, Ordination Certifications,
341 Regional Adjudications, and Financial decisions. The more relational aspects
342 of our partnership shall be the responsibility of the Cohorts rather than the
343 Regional Assemblies. Churches in the Region should consider giving up to
344 4% of their general funds towards church planting and other efforts of the
345 region.

346 4.2.2 Regional Assembly Meetings

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

351 4.2.3 Forming Regions

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

355 4.2.4 Regional Chairman

356 The RA shall elect one of their pastors to serve as chairman. The Regional
357 Chairman is to provide leadership to the Region as a steward of the
358 responsibilities and authority given to him by the Regional Assembly and its
359 elders. Any three RA pastors can nominate a pastor to fill this role.
360 Nominations shall be submitted to the RA 30 days before the election. The
361 chairman is elected by popular vote. He shall serve a three-year term. He shall
362 serve no more than two consecutive terms. The chairman will help to facilitate
363 the function of the RA through communication, organization, and example.
364 His primary responsibilities are to oversee the RA meetings and to ensure the
365 healthy function of RA Committees in accordance with the BCO. The
366 chairman shall moderate RA gatherings using rules chosen by the popular
367 vote of the RA. The RA churches should consider how to best support the
368 chairman in his efforts, including financial compensation, as needed.

369 4.2.5 Regional Committees

370 As needed, the RA shall elect the necessary committee members. Committees
371 shall have a minimum of three members. The Judicial Review Committee
372 shall have a minimum of five members. These members shall be nominated
373 by any three RA elders and elected by a popular vote (see BCO-3.2). Each
374 committee shall have a chairman. Any three RA elders can nominate a pastor
375 to fill the chairman role. Nominations need to be submitted to the RA 30 days
376 before the election. The committee members and chairmen are elected by a
377 popular vote. They shall serve a three-year term. They may serve multiple
378 terms.

379 4.2.5.1 Regional Church Planting and Adoption Committee

380 Regional Assemblies shall elect a Regional Church Planting and
381 Adoption Committee that is qualified to process and oversee all
382 church plants and adoptions in their Region per Recommendations
383 and Requirements for Church Plants and Adoptions. The
384 Recommendations and Requirements for Church Plants and
385 Adoptions are subject to the approval of the GA.

386 4.2.5.2 Ordination Certification Committee

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

392 4.2.5.3 Judicial Review Committee

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

398 4.2.5.4 Regional Finance Committee

399 Regional Assemblies shall elect a qualified Regional Finance
400 Committee that is trained and equipped in church finance to organize
401 and present a yearly budget in their Region per the

402 Recommendations and Requirements for Finance Committees. The
403 Recommendations and Requirements for Finance Committees are
404 subject to the approval of the GA.

405 **4.3 General Assembly (GA)⁵⁹**

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

412 4.3.1 Formation of Committees

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

419 4.3.2 Confession of Faith

420 The GA shall oversee the Confession of Faith and any proposed changes to
421 the Confession of Faith. Any changes to the Confession of Faith must be
422 brought by a GA Committee or any 5 GA representatives. Proposed changes
423 must be submitted at least 120 days before the meeting of the GA and can
424 only be ratified by a ¾ majority of the GA.

425 4.3.3 Book of Church Order

426 The GA shall oversee the BCO. Any changes to the BCO must be brought by
427 any GA committee or any three GA representatives. Proposed changes to the
428 BCO must be submitted to all GA members at least 90 days prior to meeting.
429 Changes to the BCO can only be made with a 2/3 vote of the GA.

⁵⁹ Using "General Assembly" versus "Council of Elders" might help those outside better understand this term. Many denominations call their central council of elders the "General Assembly."

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- 430 4.3.4 General Assembly Chairman
- 431 4.3.4.1 The GA shall elect a chairman annually from their own number. The
432 Chairman must be an objective moderator without conflicts of interest
433 in his role. He shall not be a voting member of the Oversight
434 Committee nor paid staff for TFC.
- 435 4.3.4.2 The chairman shall be nominated by at least three GA members and
436 elected by a popular vote (see BCO-3.2). Nominations for the GA
437 Chairman must be submitted at least 30 days before the meeting of
438 the GA and will be elected by the popular vote of the GA (see BCO-
439 3.2).
- 440 4.3.4.3 The Chairman will moderate the following meeting of the GA using
441 *Robert's Rules of Order* or an alternative set of rules approved by 2/3
442 of the GA.
- 443 4.3.4.4 The Chairman will serve as the point of contact for organizing the
444 agenda for the annual meeting and any special meetings of the GA.
- 445 4.3.4.5 Any three representatives may initiate a request for a special meeting
446 through the Chairman to poll the GA in order to ascertain whether
447 there is sufficient interest in a special meeting. The poll results shall
448 be made available to all GA representatives.
- 449 4.3.5 Motions and Reports
- 450 The GA shall vote on any motions or reports brought by any committee or any
451 three representatives. All motions and reports must be received by the GA
452 representatives 30 days prior to meeting. Decisions on these motions and
453 report responses will require a simple majority vote.
- 454 4.3.6 Contributions
- 455 The GA shall receive and manage contributions through the use of appropriate
456 committees to promote the health and growth of TFC. All member churches
457 are asked to give 2% of their annual general fund to this central fund, 4% of
458 their church's general fund to regional functions and another 4% of their
459 general fund to mission work of their choice, including regional and TFC-
460 wide efforts in church planting and the global mission work of TFC.

461 4.3.7 Recommendations and Requirements

462 The GA shall approve all and any guidelines and for any function of TFC. No
463 funds will be spent, nor any binding actions imposed apart from established
464 guidelines, budgets, and requirements explicitly approved by the GA.
465 Recommendations and Requirements shall require a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote by the
466 GA.

467 **4.4 Committees of the General Assembly⁶⁰**

468 4.4.1 Overview of GA Committees

469 Committees shall consist of elders of TFC especially qualified for the duties
470 of the respective committee. Committees may also contain exceptionally
471 qualified members from the churches of TFC. Committees are tasked by the
472 GA for specified purposes. Committees are to provide leadership to address
473 specific goals as stewards of the responsibilities and authority given to them
474 by the GA and its elders. They serve at the will of the GA and should orient
475 themselves to best inform and equip the GA for making key decisions for
476 TFC.

477 4.4.2 Appointments and Terms

478 Committee members shall be nominated by any three GA members and
479 elected by popular vote (see BCO-3.2). All nominations for committee
480 members must be received by the GA representatives 30 days prior to
481 meeting. The number of committee members should be an odd number from a
482 minimum of three up to whatever size is most conducive to their task. They
483 can include non-elders up to $\frac{1}{3}$ of their total number. Temporary committee
484 members shall serve a one-year term, subject to re-election. Permanent
485 committee members shall serve a three-year term.

486 4.4.3 Committee Chairmen

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

⁶⁰ 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.

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

494 4.4.4 Chairman of the Oversight Committee

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

501 4.4.5 Committee Reports

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

509 4.4.6 Permanent Committees

510 The following committees are permanent committees: Church Development
511 Committee (CDC), Church Planting & Adoptions Committee (CPAC),
512 Central Finance Committee (CFC), Global Missions Committee (GMC),
513 Oversight Committee (OC), and Polity Committee (PC).

514
515 Each of these permanent committees shall have members elected to a term of
516 three years. They may recommend budgets to be overseen by the Finance
517 Committee and presented to the GA and they may requisition and oversee
518 staff as needed.⁶¹ They shall all serve the GA in its decision-making authority.

⁶¹ N.B. – Committee members will usually serve as unpaid volunteers. Given the inherent limitations of volunteer service, it will be a normal practice for a very active permanent committee to hire staff to work under the oversight of the committee. This may include a Director and other necessary staff.

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519 4.4.6.1 Church Development Committee

520 The Church Development Committee shall work to establish
521 Recommendations and Requirements related to pastoral ministry and
522 church life. They shall steward the Recommendations and
523 Requirements for Ordination Certification, including introducing any
524 needed amendments or commentary. They shall also develop and
525 disseminate any resources helpful for pastoral and church
526 development, life and mission. They shall organize and present
527 appropriate conferences and seminars to best serve TFC. Their
528 strategic plan for conferences and seminars must be approved by the
529 GA before implementation. This plan shall be submitted as a report
530 with appropriate motions to the GA.

531 4.4.6.2 Church Planting & Adoptions Committee

532 The Church Planting & Adoptions Committee shall oversee
533 Recommendations and Requirements for the Church Planting and
534 Adoption Committees in the Regions. The committee shall also
535 develop and provide the necessary resources to support healthy and
536 vigorous church planting and adoptions among the regions and
537 beyond in TFC.

538 4.4.6.3 Finance Committee

539 The Finance Committee shall coordinate with all other committees
540 and staff and all motions involving financial expenditure. They shall
541 receive proposals and work with the various parties to present a
542 unified budget to the GA for their approval. The Finance
543 Committee's proposed budget shall be introduced as a committee
544 report to be received, amended and approved at the GA annual
545 meeting.

546 4.4.6.4 Global Missions Committee

547 The Global Missions Committee shall oversee Recommendations
548 and Requirements for the Global Missions work. This is a critical
549 aspect of our mission. Its role is to provide clarity for our elders and
550 churches. The target for this committee is the *unreached* peoples of

551 the earth⁶², while the Church Planting & Adoptions Committee will
552 be concerned about church plants in areas being reached throughout
553 the globe. They will research existing opportunities to help our local
554 churches better steward the limited resources they have.

555 4.4.6.5 Oversight Committee

556 The Oversight Committee shall work with all the various committees
557 to present an orderly agenda for the GA annual meeting. They shall
558 present their reasoned input in response to all committee reports.
559 They shall ensure corporate ethical, legal and financial compliance
560 for TFC and serve as the organizational board for non-profit law
561 purposes. They shall steward the BCO and bylaws. The President and
562 the Oversight Committee shall communicate for TFC by representing
563 established values, documents, policies, and past, present, and
564 planned activities. The committee may requisition and oversee staff
565 to help accomplish their goals. This staff could include an Executive
566 Administrator for TFC. Further Recommendations and Requirements
567 for the Oversight Committee shall be ratified by the GA.

568 4.4.6.6 Polity Committee

569 The Polity Committee shall oversee amendments to the Book of
570 Church Order and offer their expert advice to the GA and its
571 committees on any matter pertaining to the Book of Church Order.
572 When a particular decision is required on the proper interpretation
573 and application of the Book of Church Order, the Polity Committee
574 shall make a ruling that shall stand until the next GA meeting. At the
575 next GA meeting, the GA must vote whether to uphold or override
576 the ruling. This shall be done by a simple majority vote. The ruling
577 must be submitted as a Polity Committee report to the GA. The
578 Polity Committee will also develop Recommendations and
579 Requirements for itself as needed. These must be ratified by the GA.

580 4.4.7 Forming New Committees

581 Any motions within the GA to form a committee shall specify the scope and

⁶² Unreached peoples are historically defined as those ethnic groups with less than 2% who are evangelical Christians. See Zane Pratt, "Here's What We Mean by Unreached Peoples and Places," <https://www.imb.org/2016/11/22/what-do-we-mean-by-unreached-peoples-and-places/>

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582 goals of the committee. Any funding needed for the work of the committee
583 shall be first approved by the GA.

584 **5 Fidelity of Our Partnership**

585 **5.1 Confession of Faith**

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

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

595 **5.2 Ordination Recommendations and Requirements**

596 We help ensure fidelity by creating agreed-upon Ordination Recommendations and
597 Requirements that allow us to certify an elder’s ordination. Elders are gifts from the
598 ascended Jesus to local churches.⁶³ As such, it is the responsibility of local churches to
599 recognize and steward the development of elder candidates. This includes all relevant
600 training and experience followed by a methodical and clear ordination process.
601 Ordination to the office of elder is a local church function that is certified by TFC. All
602 TFC pastors will be certified for ordination by Ordination Recommendations and
603 Requirements established by the GA of Elders and their respective committees. These
604 Ordination Recommendations and Requirements will be approved by a 2/3 majority
605 vote of the GA and will become binding for all TFC ordination certifications.

606 **5.3 Church Discipline**

607 Church discipline is an essential practice of the New Testament church that protects
608 the purity of the church,⁶⁴ the witness of the church to the world,⁶⁵ and the salvation of
609 genuine Christians.⁶⁶ Although a difficult function to perform, it is necessary for the
610 good of the church, her mission, and the fame of Christ.

⁶³ Eph 4:7–12.

⁶⁴ 1 Cor 5:6-8.

⁶⁵ 1 Cor 5:1.

⁶⁶ 1 Cor 5:5.

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

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

619 TFC agrees to allow appropriate appeals of church discipline and elder charges. The
620 judgements rendered in such appeals will be duly honored as an official ruling of TFC.
621 An appropriate response to any judgement shall be a condition of continued
622 partnership. These appeals will follow the procedures outlined in the Rules of
623 Discipline in this Book of Church Order.

624 **6 Fruitfulness of Our Partnership**

625 **6.1 Church Health**

626 6.1.1 Cooperation

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

636 6.1.2 Mediation Assistance

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

644 6.1.3 Abuse and Reporting Recommendations and Requirements in TFC

645 6.1.3.1 TFC Churches in the US

646 Church health must also include at least some statement about abuse
647 and reporting standards. A full statement of our Abuse
648 Recommendations and Requirements will be created by the TFC
649 Polity Committee within 12 months of the formation of TFC.

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

654 Elders and staff members in TFC churches and staff of TFC itself are
655 mandatory reporters. They must report if a minor is believed to be at

656 risk of abuse (physical or sexual) or neglect. The elder or staff
657 member might hear about a minor currently at risk and must report
658 this. Or, they might hear from an adult about his/her abuse where the
659 abuser is still in a position to harm minors. In either case, TFC elders
660 and church staff and TFC employees must report this to the proper
661 civil authorities.

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

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

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

682 6.1.3.2 TFC Churches Outside the US

683 The policies in BCO-6.1.3.1 apply outside the US as much as is
684 possible and applicable. It is understood that certain international
685 situations will make this impossible or inadvisable.

686 6.1.4 Best Practices

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

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

692 **6.2 Pastoral Health**

693 6.2.1 Relationships

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

703 6.2.2 Training & Mentoring

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

710 6.2.3 Best Practices

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

715 6.2.4 Accountability

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

723 devil. The Cohorts are an excellent context for this sort of ongoing
724 accountability.

725 **6.3 Evangelism**

726 6.3.1 Resources

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

735 6.3.2 Cooperation

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

742 **6.4 Church Planting**

743 6.4.1 Resources

744 The Regional Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, in cooperation with
745 the GA Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, shall develop and
746 disseminate the resources needed for healthy and vigorous church planting in
747 the regions.

748 6.4.2 Cooperation

749 Cohorts, regions, and the entirety of TFC should partner together to advance
750 church planting. This should include but not be limited to sponsoring
751 internships, sending church planters to other churches, funding the training
752 and development of church planters, donating to new church plants, and
753 sending members of the church to be a part of a church plant.

754 6.4.3 Processes

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

761 Once a church plant is established and incorporated with at least one elder, it
762 may apply for full status as a member church of TFC.

763 **6.5 Church Adoptions**

764 6.5.1 Resources

765 The Regional Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, in cooperation with
766 the GA Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, shall develop and
767 disseminate the resources needed for healthy and vigorous church adoptions in
768 the regions.

769 6.5.2 Cooperation

770 Cohorts, regions, and the entirety of TFC should partner together to advance
771 church adoptions. This should include but not be limited to reaching out to
772 candidate churches and pastors, including them in the various activities of our
773 association, guiding them through the adoption process, inviting them to the
774 various pastoral gatherings among Cohorts, regions, and the GA, and
775 providing funds for the candidate church to participate in various TFC
776 activities.

777 6.5.3 Processes

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

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

784 **6.6 Global Missions**

785 6.6.1 Background

786 TFC exists to help fulfill the Great Commission’s call to make disciples of all
787 nations. We recognize that we do so alongside a long line of faithful and
788 fruitful churches, missionaries, and agencies laboring throughout the world
789 over many years. Therefore, we do not seek to operate independently or
790 originally in our efforts. We seek to cooperate with any and all churches,
791 missionaries, and agencies that will mutually benefit our efforts to fulfill the
792 Great Commission. We prioritize efforts aimed at planting viable indigenous-
793 led churches among the least-reached peoples of the world with the hope they
794 will become part of TFC or a like-minded association of churches.⁶⁷

795 6.6.2 Activities

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

⁶⁷ 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/>

805 **7 Trinity Fellowship Churches Commitments**

806 **7.1 Provisions for Initial Fifteen Months**

807 For the first fifteen months of this partnership, the normal time requirements for
808 introducing nominations, motions, amendments, and any other duties of the Cohorts,
809 Regions, and General Assembly may be waived at the discretion of such bodies. This
810 is given to allow for flexibility in implementing the normal function of these bodies.
811 *Confession of Faith* changes, BCO changes, and the nomination and election of
812 Committee members and chairmen may be performed immediately at the appropriate
813 meetings. During this time, implementations of Cohorts and Regions may be delayed
814 as needed. Additionally, the General Assembly may vote to include non-member
815 elders and experts as part of the various committees. Also, the General Assembly may
816 form ad-hoc committees or a committee-of-the-whole or ask certain committees to
817 assume duties not normally performed by the respective committees. These temporary
818 provisions are given in order to best facilitate the health and growth of TFC in its early
819 stages.

820 **7.2 Interim TFC Partnership Agreement**

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

826

The Initial Agreement:

827

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

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

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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.

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

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

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Signed:

Date:

854

Church:

855 **8 Discipline**

856 **8.1 General Principles**

857 Trinity Fellowship Churches are committed to obeying the Scripture's commands to
858 provide processes of discipline for health and protection within our individual
859 churches.⁶⁸ These processes are to be biblical, just, and maintained with truth and
860 grace at every level (local or regional adjudications, member discipline, elder
861 discipline).

862 8.1.1 Church discipline is given by Christ to his Church to promote the glory of
863 Christ, godliness and purity,⁶⁹ to provide a venue of possible rescue of
864 members who have become hardened by sin,⁷⁰ and to provide justice,
865 correction, and protections between members during conflict.⁷¹

866 8.1.2 At every level (local, regional, etc.), discipline within TFC is to be organized
867 and carried out in a consistent manner by ordained TFC elders as outlined in
868 the TFC *Recommendations and Requirements for Discipline and Adjudication*
869 (RRDA). Each church must ensure that there is full compliance in printed
870 words (e.g., church handbooks, policies, by-laws) and in deeds (e.g., actual
871 adjudications and church disciplinary hearings).

872 8.1.3 Before any disciplinary actions are taken, appropriate efforts to draw members
873 to healthy and peaceable interactions and reconciliation should be pursued if
874 possible (e.g., through mediation, etc., see BCO 2.3).

875 8.1.4 This section assumes that the laws of all relevant civil authorities apply and is
876 in no way intended to supersede or counteract such laws. Whether or not civil
877 law requires, all TFC Elders and staff are mandatory reporters as outlined in
878 BCO 6.1.3.

879 **8.2 Reconciliation, Mediation and Conflict Resolution**

880 Biblical peacemaking seeks to lead parties in conflict to reconciliation and conflict

⁶⁸ Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-6:8; etc.

⁶⁹ 1 Cor. 5:7-8

⁷⁰ Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 5:5

⁷¹ 1 Cor. 6:1-8

881 resolution that honors the unity and peace we have in the gospel.⁷² Biblical
882 peacemaking is one of the highest priorities for a Christian.⁷³ An offended or injured
883 party should not pursue prosecution of another Christian without first seeking biblical
884 reconciliation. If a formal process is required to achieve reconciliation, the parties will
885 agree to function according to the principles and processes laid forth in the RRDA.
886 Any party involved in a potential adjudication shall fill out the Checklist for Biblical
887 Peacemaking, in Appendix IV of the RRDA prior to pursuing adjudication. In
888 addition, each church in TFC shall have a mediation and conflict resolution policy as
889 part of their church discipline policy. Local elders must instruct and lead their
890 congregation in the practices of church discipline and biblical peacemaking.

891 **8.3 Witnesses and Evidence**

892 8.3.1 General principles

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

906 In all proceedings, extra care must be taken to ensure that all parties involved
907 in the adjudication (plaintiff, defendant, accuser, potential victim, witnesses,
908 etc.) are treated fairly and are afforded all necessary protections and care
909 dynamics.⁷⁴ Victims of physical or sexual abuse are neither required nor
910 advised to meet face-to-face with their abuser.

⁷² Eph. 4:1-3; Phi. 2:1-5

⁷³ Matt. 5:23-24, 18:15-16; Rom. 12:16-18; Gal. 6:1; Phil. 4:2-3

⁷⁴ 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.

911 8.3.2 Credibility

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

920 8.3.2.1 Witnesses of Character

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

923 8.3.2.1.1 Harbor ill will or a vengeful spirit against the defendant

924 8.3.2.1.2 Be hasty in judgment or quick to accuse

925 8.3.2.1.3 Lack integrity

926 8.3.2.1.4 Have a reputation for dishonesty

927 8.3.2.1.5 Be under discipline or a process of discipline themselves

928 8.3.2.1.6 Possess a conflict of interest or would benefit from the
929 defendant being found guilty

930 8.3.3 Admissibility⁷⁵

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

933 8.3.3.1 There are at least one or two other credible witnesses who have
934 registered similar relevant and reliable concerns.⁷⁶

935 8.3.3.2 There are at least two pieces of clear evidence produced that would
936 lead to a just cause for accusation to be admitted for a hearing.

937 8.3.3.3 There is one piece of evidence that cannot be contrived and is beyond
938 reasonable doubt in the estimation of the Moderator and/or panel

⁷⁵ See RRDA, page 82 for specific instructions to the process of admitting and evaluating evidence

⁷⁶ See Appendix 3 of the RRDA

939 (e.g., video or audio footage, court records from court of law, official
940 police report).

941 8.3.3.4 Evidence needed to determine guilt must be clear and convincing.
942 This means that the guilt of the party is highly likely though not
943 necessarily beyond a reasonable doubt. This is the second highest
944 level of evidence used in establishing guilt.⁷⁷

945 **8.4 Local Church Discipline**

946 8.4.1 Elderships are to maintain local church discipline as shown in Scripture as a
947 necessary and ongoing part of church leadership for the health of the church
948 and for God’s glory. Church discipline should be enacted whenever a believer
949 is caught in serious sin,⁷⁸ and the steps of discipline (Matt. 18) should
950 commence forward as the person demonstrates a clear lack of repentance and
951 response to the intervention and care of the church (i.e., “not listening”). Each
952 church should have an established and documented church discipline policy.
953 Each church in TFC should provide biblical teaching on the biblical principles
954 of church discipline. No person should be allowed to join a TFC church
955 without agreeing to abide by and submit to their local church discipline
956 processes. Each church should inform their members of the appeal processes
957 for adjudications.⁷⁹

958 8.4.2 Ordained elders are to oversee church discipline. Only ordained elders are to
959 adjudicate in church discipline cases. In cases where there are not enough
960 elders present locally to comprise an adjudicatory panel, the region will supply
961 the needed ordained elders.

962 8.4.3 The steps outlined in Matthew 18:15-20 should be followed carefully and
963 privacy protected for all involved. The initial steps are private, informal, and
964 gradual. The discipline moves forward in the steps and becomes formal if the
965 elders uphold the veracity of the charge(s) and the person continues to be

⁷⁷ 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.

⁷⁸ Titus 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10

⁷⁹ See RRDA 5.1.3

966 unrepentant. The steps of church discipline should be as follows:

967 8.4.3.1 **First step:** “Go tell him his fault, between you and him alone” (Matt.
968 18:15). If a church member confesses to or is caught in serious sin or
969 commits a sin against another believer, the person sinned against or
970 who is witness to or has evidence of their brother’s sin(s), in most
971 cases, approaches the brother in private, bringing their evidence and
972 appeals to repentance.

973 8.4.3.2 **Second step:** “If he doesn’t listen, take one or two others along with
974 you” (v. 16). If the attempt to privately exhort the accused brother are
975 met with refusal to listen (i.e., unrepentant refusal to comply with
976 concerns) then the person who was sinned against or who witnessed
977 sin(s) or has evidence of the brother’s sin involves other church
978 members (one or more), including the local church elders. If the
979 elders uphold the veracity of the charge(s) and the person continues to
980 be unrepentant, this process transitions from informal to formal
981 church discipline. This step results in the widening of the circle of
982 people involved to bring appropriate credibility to the concerns and
983 additional loving appeals to the brother caught in sin. At times, this
984 step will result in reconciliation due to repentance, or due to the
985 correcting of the misjudgment of the accusing party, as the “one or
986 two others” involved bring increased objectivity.

987 8.4.3.3 **Third step:** “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church” (v.
988 17a). Should the unrepentant brother refuse to comply with the
989 concerns and calls to repentance from the widening circle of church
990 members involved in seeking to help restore him, then the broader
991 church gets involved in a meaningful way to provide further
992 objectivity and aid to the concerns of the persons’ involved in seeking
993 the accused brother’s restoration. This third step will be some variant
994 of a final call to the unrepentant brother from the church under the
995 directive of elders.

996 8.4.3.4 **Final step:** “If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to
997 you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (v. 17b). The final step, known
998 as “excommunication”, occurs when the person who has been proven
999 as unrepentant through the first three steps of church discipline is now
1000 removed from the church and is no longer a member in good standing.
1001 That individual is to be treated as a non-Christian, as their behavior

1002 and their profession are inconsistent – they are bearing bad fruit like
1003 an unbeliever. Therefore, the church will relate differently to the
1004 excommunicated person, no longer offering them the Christian
1005 fellowship that being members together once held before the church
1006 discipline process was necessary.

1007 8.4.4 At every point during church discipline, the goal is one of merciful reclamation
1008 and repentance.⁸⁰ This goal should be demonstrated at all points through the
1009 tone and content of communication. Even if ending with excommunication, the
1010 process of discipline should always leave room for future repentance and
1011 restoration. It is the duty of elderships to decide when to readmit the penitent to
1012 the fellowship of the church.⁸¹ It is the duty of congregants to forgive, comfort,
1013 and reaffirm their love for such a one.⁸²

1014 8.4.5 If an eldership refuses to hear charges of a doctrinal or publicly scandalous
1015 nature and two other elderships file charges with the TFC Judicial Review
1016 Committee, the JRC shall commence an investigation that may lead to
1017 adjudications.

1018 8.4.6 Appeals to judgments rendered in church discipline hearings may be appealed
1019 to the TFC JRC and the Court of Appeals along the established channels
1020 provided in section 42 of the *RRDA*.

1021 **8.5 Discipline of Elders**

1022 8.5.1 Due Process

1023 At times there will be accusations made towards an elder within TFC, or an
1024 elder may be caught in sin or confesses to a serious moral failure. It is at these
1025 times that a particular process should be enacted that is commensurate to the
1026 office they fill. Scripture commands that we treat elders in particular ways
1027 under these conditions. For any accusation brought to an eldership concerning
1028 one or more of their elders, care must be taken in processing the credibility of
1029 witnesses/evidence in obedience to 1 Tim. 5:19, which states, “Do not admit a
1030 charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.”
1031 Local elders are to decide whether evidence or witness testimonies are

⁸⁰ Galatians 6:1-2

⁸¹ 2 Cor. 2:6-8

⁸² 2 Cor. 2:7-8

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- 1032 credible, as it is only through the governing officers of the church that
1033 accusations are evaluated and determined as admissible. If there are no other
1034 corroborating witnesses or clear pieces of evidence provided, the accusations
1035 may be dismissed.
- 1036 Should an elder confess to serious sin or even be accused of such sins, either
1037 the accused elder or the other local elders shall immediately contact their
1038 Regional Leader and the Chairman of the Judicial Review Committee for the
1039 purpose of seeking counsel and possible aid in complying with the RRDA in
1040 the adjudication process.
- 1041 The care taken in processing any accusations against an elder is both to protect
1042 the church against wayward elders and to protect elders against wayward
1043 church members. A proper due process will balance both of these concerns and
1044 will require that:
- 1045 8.5.1.1 Accusations must be made within 2 years of the offense(s).
1046 Notwithstanding this requirement, any allegation involving sexual
1047 misconduct or illegal activity may be brought without timeframe
1048 limitation.
- 1049 8.5.1.2 The accused elder has the right to face his accuser(s), unless the
1050 charge stems from a minor.
- 1051 8.5.2 Grounds for Discipline of an Elder
- 1052 The grounds of the accusation must be upon a documented and serious breach
1053 of sound doctrine (as outlined in the *TFC Confession of Faith*) or an offense
1054 that would disqualify an elder from their office.⁸³ See RRDA 6.5.4 for the
1055 outline of admissible charges.
- 1056 8.5.3 Results of adjudications
- 1057 Results will be one of the following: Cleared of charges, private rebuke, public
1058 rebuke, removal from office, church discipline, all as further outlined in the
1059 *RRDA*.
- 1060 8.5.4 Suspension of Elders
- 1061 Should an elder be accused of serious criminal or scandalous sin the remaining

⁸³ Qualifications stated in 1 Tim. 3:1-8; Titus 1:5-9 and as described in BCO 8.4.1

1062 elders may, at their own discretion, temporarily suspend the accused elder from
1063 his office and its duties with or without pay until an adjudicatory panel rules on
1064 the matter. In a case where the eldership decides to suspend pay, if the elder is
1065 ultimately cleared of the charges, he must receive his withheld pay in full. Two
1066 unaccused elders are required to approve this action. If there are not two
1067 remaining unaccused elders the JRC will supply necessary elders for the
1068 adjudicatory panel. In the situation where there is only one elder and he is the
1069 accused, the Region will assume responsibility for the care of the church. The
1070 Regional Leader will coordinate that care. The financial assets of the church
1071 remain under the control of the local church officers or their delegates.

1072 8.5.4.1 Charges against an Eldership

1073 Should the actions or decisions of an entire eldership create grounds for an
1074 admissible charge (BCO 8.5.2), the charge may be brought by an individual,
1075 individual elder, or another eldership as outlined in *RRDA* 6 & 7. Additionally,
1076 persistent failure to uphold the requirements of the TFC BCO or the TFC
1077 Partnership Agreement is also a ground for charges against an eldership.

1078 Should an entire eldership be removed and their local church members desire
1079 to remain in partnership with TFC, they should consult the chairman of the
1080 Church Adoptions Committee (information found at
1081 info@TrinityFellowshipChurches.com).

1082 **8.6 Judicial Review Committees**

1083 8.6.1 Appointment of the Judicial Review Committee

1084 The Regional Assembly will install a *minimum* of five elders to the Judicial
1085 Review Committee.⁸⁴ The JRC will provide the necessary adjudicatory body
1086 for all appeals and adjudications that rise beyond the scope of a local eldership
1087 and will provide counsel to local elderships in their own adjudications.

1088 Members of the Judicial Review Committee will serve six-year terms with no
1089 term limits. If an elder resigns before his term is up, the Region nominates,
1090 votes and then appoints a replacement for the duration of the term, pending
1091 confirmation from the RA by simple majority vote.

1092 The JRC will be maintained as a minimum of five pastors in a Region,

⁸⁴ See BCO 4.2.5

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1093 preferably from different churches, with each case heard by three members of
1094 the committee. Men are assigned to a case through a blind draw. An elder may
1095 be exempted from inclusion in a case for various reasons, from time constraints
1096 to conflicts of interest. If necessary, JRC members may be shared between
1097 regions serving on adjudication panels, if approved by both regions.

1098 8.6.2 Powers and Responsibilities of the Judicial Review Committee

1099 8.6.2.1 The Judicial Review Committee should serve as a resource for
1100 informal counsel to elderships walking through a 1 Timothy 5:19-21
1101 proceeding at the local level. This is to ensure that the procedural
1102 elements of discipline are followed.

1103 8.6.2.2 A local eldership should not publicly rebuke or remove an elder
1104 without the involvement of the Judicial Review Committee.

1105 8.6.2.3 In these instances, the JRC is not weighing in on the guilt or
1106 innocence of the elder but assisting to ensure that a fair and just
1107 process has been carried out according to the procedures spelled out
1108 in the *RRDA*.

1109 8.6.2.4 The Judicial Review Committee will also serve as a body of appeal
1110 for church members who have been disciplined or removed from
1111 membership. The JRC must hear the appeal of any excommunicated
1112 member, if it is made within the allotted time frame through the
1113 appropriate channels (See *RRDA* 42).

1114 8.6.2.5 If a charge is brought against an elder but is not admitted by the
1115 Moderator, the person bringing the charge may appeal to the Judicial
1116 Review Committee. The JRC will determine whether or not the case
1117 shall be heard by the local Panel.

1118 8.6.2.6 The Judicial Review Committee will be a place of appeal for any
1119 elder who is removed by a local Panel. The JRC must hear the appeal
1120 of any trial decision regarding an elder at the local level (if the appeal
1121 is made within the allotted time frame). This result will be a binding
1122 decision in which the elder in question is cleared of charges, privately

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- 1123 or publicly rebuked, or removed from office.⁸⁵
- 1124 8.6.2.7 The Judicial Review Committee will serve as the original adjudicating
1125 body for the trial of an accused elder in the case where a local
1126 eldership is too small to adequately deal with the matter. In such a
1127 case, the TFC Court of Appeals would handle any further appeal.
- 1128 8.6.2.8 A local panel has recourse of appeal to TFC Court of Appeals should
1129 they disagree with any judgment by the JRC that overturns their prior
1130 verdict. However, the decision of the JRC should be enacted, even
1131 while the appeals process continues.
- 1132 8.6.2.9 When the JRC has the original jurisdiction in the case of an accused
1133 elder when the local eldership is too small to adequately deal with the
1134 matter, once their Panel renders a decision, the execution of that
1135 decision shall be the exclusive responsibility of the unaccused local
1136 elder(s). Should there be no unaccused elders, the execution of the
1137 decision shall be the exclusive responsibility of the JRC.
- 1138 8.6.2.10 Charges Against Extra-Local Leaders and Committee Members
- 1139 8.6.2.10.1 Charges against extra-local leaders that pertain generally to
1140 their qualification as elders will be handled according to the
1141 usual chain of jurisdiction for an elder: local Panel, Judicial
1142 Review Committee, TFC Court of Appeals.
- 1143 8.6.2.10.2 Each committee will have specific agreed upon
1144 responsibilities, policies and procedures, including the
1145 circumstances that are appropriate to the removal of an
1146 elder from a committee (BCO 4.4.3, et. al.)
- 1147 8.6.2.11 Removal of a Church from TFC due to BCO noncompliance
- 1148 Any church that willfully, demonstrably and consistently fails to
1149 comply to the explicit mandates of the BCO over the period of two or
1150 more years may be removed from the partnership per the decision of
1151 the JRC following the trial procedures outlined in the RRDA.

⁸⁵ Such decisions are binding by the authority of this partnership of churches. In TFC, where authority is delegated to extra-local leaders, such as in the JRC, it is nonetheless a real authority within our partnership.

1152 **8.7 The Court of Appeals**

1153 8.7.1 Candidates for the TFC Court of Appeals are drawn from the members of the
1154 Regional Judicial Review Committees. They shall be nominated by any three
1155 GA members. Nominations shall be submitted to GA members at least 30 days
1156 before meeting. They shall be elected by popular vote according to BCO 3.2.
1157 Members of the TFC Court of Appeal are Appellate Elders. These Appellate
1158 Elders will be appointed to six-year terms, with no term limits.

1159 8.7.2 The number of Jurists will correspond to the number of Regions. The
1160 minimum number of jurists shall be 5. If there are not enough regions,
1161 additional jurists may be drawn from any region to make up the minimum. The
1162 General Assembly may appoint additional jurists to serve on the Court of
1163 Appeals on an ad-hoc basis by special meeting with at least a 15-day notice.
1164 Such jurists need only serve for the current adjudicatory issue. Any two GA
1165 delegates may call for such a special meeting in this case. Voting for ad-hoc
1166 Appellate Elders may be done electronically and remotely.

1167 8.7.3 When a case is appealed, three Jurists will be assigned to determine whether
1168 they will hear the case.

1169 8.7.4 When an appeal is heard by the TFC Court of Appeals, the Appellate Elders
1170 from the Region in which the charge originated will recuse themselves in order
1171 to prevent conflict of interest. Should there be insufficient Appellate Elders,
1172 Appellate Elders from the respective region may serve if they did not
1173 previously serve as elders in the particular case. Additionally, Appellate Elders
1174 appointed per BCO 8.7.3 may serve.

1175 8.7.5 A blind draw will be used to assign three Jurists to a case.

1176 8.7.6 Responsibilities of the TFC Court of Appeals

1177 8.7.6.1 The Court of Appeals shall conduct all adjudications according to the
1178 *RRDA*.

1179 8.7.6.2 The TFC Court of Appeals has the right to review or not review any
1180 appeal of a case that has previously been decided by a Regional
1181 Judicial Review Committee. Any decision of a Regional Judicial
1182 Review Committee may be appealed up to the TFC Court of Appeals
1183 by either party to the decision, by an eldership or by a Panel whose

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- 1184 judgment has been overruled.
- 1185 8.7.6.3 In any case where the Regional Judicial Review Committee has
1186 assumed original jurisdiction for a local church case and conducted a
1187 trial the TFC Court of Appeals must hear the case if it is appealed.
1188 The TFC Court of Appeals may not decline to hear such a case.
- 1189 8.7.6.4 The Court has the right to uphold or overturn the decision of a
1190 regional court and is not bound to grant another trial.
- 1191 8.7.6.5 Censure or Removal of a Region from TFC
- 1192 8.7.6.5.1 Circumstances requiring the censure or removal of a
1193 Region include:
- 1194 8.7.6.5.1.1 *Persistent deviation from the TFC Statement of*
1195 *Faith*
- 1196 8.7.6.5.1.2 *Persistent divisive behavior (e.g., making or*
1197 *condoning charges against TFC members outside of*
1198 *the appropriate judicatories)*
- 1199 8.7.6.5.1.3 *Unrepentant sin on the part of the elders*
- 1200 8.7.6.5.1.4 *Persistent failure to uphold the TFC BCO or the*
1201 *TFC Partnership Agreement*
- 1202 8.7.6.5.2 Charges against a region must be brought by the lesser of
1203 either ten members or twenty-five percent of the General
1204 Assembly. Elders and elderships within a Region which
1205 register their dissent against the position or action of the
1206 Region will be exempted from censure or removal.
- 1207 8.7.6.5.3 If the TFC Court of Appeals decides to hear charges
1208 brought against a region, then after any necessary recusals,
1209 a blind draw will be used to assign five elders to the case. If
1210 less than five Jurists remain after recusals, then all of them
1211 shall try the case.
- 1212 8.7.6.5.4 The TFC Court of Appeals will render one of the following
1213 judgments: Not Guilty or Censure or Removal.
- 1214 8.7.6.5.5 If the judgment is for censure, the General Assembly will
1215 finalize or overturn the decision by a simple majority vote.
- 1216 8.7.6.5.6 If the judgment is for removal, a two-thirds majority vote
1217 by the General Assembly will finalize the decision of the
1218 TFC Court of Appeals.

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1219 8.7.6.5.7 If the judgment of the TFC Court of Appeals is not upheld
1220 by a two-thirds majority, it will immediately initiate a
1221 simple majority vote by the General Assembly on whether
1222 to censure the Region.