

Trinity Fellowship



Churches

Book of Church Order

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Trinity Fellowship Churches Book of Church Order

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1 **1 Foundational Commitments**

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

5 **1.1 Confessional**

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

10 1.1.1 Our Confession of Faith is Reformed.

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

19 1.1.2 Our Confession of Faith is Christocentric.

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

30 1.1.3 Our Confession of Faith is Continuationist.

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

¹ Tit 1:9.

² 1 Cor 2:2.

³ Acts 4:12.

⁴ John 5:39; Luke 24:27.

⁵ Eph 2:6–13.

⁶ 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12.

⁷ Acts 2:17–21.

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34 sanctification. Yet, as Continuationists, we also believe all the New Testament
35 gifts⁸ are available throughout the Church age. Further, these are not just to be
36 believed in but earnestly desired for the building up of the people of God.⁹
37 Such gifts are manifestations of God's power for the revelation of his glory and
38 the great blessing of his Church - and draw the lost into the kingdom of God.
39 Being both Christocentric and Continuationist, we seek to be *robustly*
40 *trinitarian*.

41 1.1.4 Our Confession of Faith is Complementarian.

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

54 1.1.5 Our Confession of Faith is Baptist.

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

59 1.2 Connectional

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

⁸ Allowing that the NT gift lists are not exhaustive.

⁹ 1 Cor 12:7–11; 14:1.

¹⁰ Gen 1:27.

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

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

¹³ Gen 2:24–25; Eccl 4:9–10.

¹⁴ 1 Tim 3:1–7.

¹⁵ 1 Tim 2:12.

¹⁶ Eph 5:21–33.

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

65 1.2.1 Connected through the Holy Spirit
66 The Bible affirms that all Christians are part of the singular “body of Christ”
67 with Christ as its head.¹⁸ There might be “many parts” in this body, but there is
68 only one body.¹⁹ Our ecclesiastical union is, therefore, an application and
69 expression of our deeper and enduring spiritual union.

70 1.2.2 Connected through Relationship
71 This ecclesiastical and organizational union is to be mirrored in committed and
72 God-honoring relationships consistent with what it means to be a part of the
73 household of God.²⁰ We want sincerely and affectionately to regard one
74 another as brothers and sisters in Christ and fellow workers and fellow soldiers
75 and even be ministers to one another's needs.²¹ As we live out our Christian
76 lives, we desire to bear one another's burdens, build one another up and stir up
77 one another to love and good works.²²

78 1.2.3 Connected through Developing Healthy Elderships and Churches
79 Through conferences, Cohorts, and various other contexts, we are committed
80 to creating healthy elderships of equipped, qualified, encouraged, and
81 empowered men. We also seek to extend this cooperation, life, growth, and
82 protection to the churches themselves (see BCO-6 for much more on
83 “Fruitfulness” derived from our connectedness).

84 1.2.4 Connected through Our Foundational Documents
85 To undergird our ecclesiastical union, we subscribe to a common Confession
86 of Faith, *Book of Church Order*, and TFC Partnership Agreement. These
87 documents bring critical definition to what we believe, do, and are committed
88 to as member churches of TFC.

89 1.2.5 Connected through Mission
90 Though each church is committed to mission in its own context, we also seek
91 ways to connect with other churches within TFC for church planting, frontier
92 missions, and strengthening the evangelistic culture and initiatives of each
93 member church.

94 **1.3 Missional**

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

¹⁸ Eph 1:22–23.

¹⁹ 1 Cor 12:20.

²⁰ Eph 2:19.

²¹ Phil 2:25.

²² Gal 6:2; 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:24.

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

²³ John 20:21; 15:26.

²⁴ John 20:21; Matt 28:18–20.

²⁵ Eph 4:11–13.

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

²⁷ Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8.

113 **2 Church Polity**

114 **2.1 Christ's Authority**

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

122 **2.2 The Nature and Context of Church Authority**

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

137 **2.3 Membership**

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

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.

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).

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

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

159 **2.4 Elders**³⁶

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

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

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

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

³⁴ Phil 1:1 et al.

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

183 **2.5 Deacons**

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

193 **2.6 Discipline**

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

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

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.

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

⁴⁷ Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5.

205 **2.7 Denominational Leaders**

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

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

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

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

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

225 **3 Partnership**

226 **3.1 Scriptural Bases**

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

235 **3.2 The Nature and Extent of Our Partnership**

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

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

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

254 **3.3 Voting In Our Partnership**

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

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

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

270 **4 Forms of Our Partnership**

271 **4.1 Cohorts**

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

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

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

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

296 The Cohort's prime goals are:

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

302 **4.2 Regional Assemblies**

303 4.2.1 Overview

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

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

312 4.2.2 Regional Assembly Meetings

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

317 4.2.3 Forming Regions

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

321 4.2.4 Regional Chairman

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

337 4.2.5 Regional Committees

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

345 4.2.5.1 Regional Committees Chairmen

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

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

354 4.2.5.2 Regional Planting and Partnership Committee

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

365 4.2.5.3 Ordination Certification Committee

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

371 4.2.5.4 Judicial Review Committee

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

377 4.2.5.5 Regional Finance Committee

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

384 **4.3 General Assembly (GA)**

385 The General Assembly of Elders is comprised of one representative elder from each
386 TFC church. Each representative must be currently ordained and actively serving as an
387 elder of his church. It gathers to oversee our association. It meets annually and when
388 called by at least 25% of the representatives. It shall choose a location that is most

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389 convenient for the representatives. Representatives who are unable to travel shall be
390 allowed to participate and vote via teleconference. It shall have the following
391 responsibilities:

392 4.3.1 Formation of Committees

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

399 4.3.2 Confession of Faith

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

405 4.3.3 Book of Church Order

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

410 4.3.4 General Assembly Chairman

411 4.3.4.1 The GA shall elect a Chairman annually from their own number. The
412 Chairman must be an objective moderator without conflicts of interest
413 in his role. He shall not be a voting member of the Oversight
414 Committee nor paid staff for TFC.

415 4.3.4.2 The Chairman shall be nominated by at least three GA members and
416 elected by a popular vote (see BCO-3.2). Nominations for the GA
417 Chairman must be submitted at least 30 days before the meeting of
418 the GA and will be elected by the popular vote of the GA (see BCO-
419 3.2).

420 4.3.4.3 The Chairman will moderate the following meeting of the GA using
421 *Robert's Rules of Order* or an alternative set of rules approved by $\frac{2}{3}$
422 of the GA.

423 4.3.4.4 The Chairman will serve as the point of contact for organizing the
424 agenda for the annual meeting and any special meetings of the GA.

425 4.3.4.5 Any three representatives may initiate a request for a special meeting
426 through the Chairman. The Chairman shall present the request from

427 the representatives verbatim to poll the GA in order to ascertain
428 whether there is 25% or more of the GA interested in a special
429 meeting. The poll results shall be made available to all GA
430 representatives.

431 4.3.5 Motions and Reports

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

436 4.3.6 Contributions

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

443 4.3.7 Recommendations and Requirements

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

449 **4.4 Committees of the General Assembly⁵⁹**

450 4.4.1 Overview of GA Committees

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

459 4.4.2 Appointments and Terms

460 Committee members shall be nominated by any three GA members and elected
461 by popular vote (see BCO-3.2). All nominations for committee members must
462 be received by the GA representatives 30 days prior to meeting. The number of

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

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463 committee members should be an odd number from a minimum of three up to
464 whatever size is most conducive to their task. They can include non-elders up
465 to 1/3 of their total number; however, non-elder committee members are not
466 voting members and may not be empaneled in any adjudicatory proceedings.
467 Temporary committee members shall serve a one-year term, subject to re-
468 election. Permanent committee members shall serve a three-year term.

469 4.4.3 Committee Chairmen

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

477 4.4.4 Chairman of the Oversight Committee

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

484 4.4.5 Committee Reports

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

492 4.4.6 Permanent Committees

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

497 Each of these permanent committees shall have members elected to a term of
498 three years. They shall all serve the GA in its decision-making authority. They
499 may recommend budgets to be overseen by the Finance Committee and
500 presented to the GA, and they may requisition and oversee staff as
501 needed. Staff should be members of a TFC church. If they are not members,
502 the respective committee shall present a yearly review and recommendation on

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503 the staff member to the fall General Assembly of TFC for a vote of continuing
504 service.

505 4.4.6.1 Church Development Committee

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

516 4.4.6.2 Finance Committee

517 The Finance Committee shall coordinate with all other committees
518 and staff and all motions involving financial expenditure. They shall
519 receive proposals and work with the various parties to present a
520 unified budget to the GA for their approval. The Finance Committee's
521 proposed budget shall be introduced as a committee report to be
522 received, amended, and approved at the GA annual meeting.

523 4.4.6.3 General Assembly Planting & Partnership Committee

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

530 4.4.6.4 Global Missions Committee

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

⁶⁰ 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/>

539 4.4.6.5 Oversight Committee

540 The Oversight Committee shall work with all the various committees
541 to present an orderly agenda for the GA annual meeting. They shall
542 present their reasoned input in response to all committee reports. They
543 shall ensure corporate ethical, legal, and financial compliance for TFC
544 and serve as the organizational board for non-profit law purposes.
545 They shall steward the BCO and by-laws. The President and the
546 Oversight Committee shall communicate for TFC by representing
547 established values, documents, policies, and past, present, and
548 planned activities. The committee may requisition and oversee staff to
549 help accomplish their goals. This staff could include an Executive
550 Administrator for TFC. Further Recommendations and Requirements
551 for the Oversight Committee shall be ratified by the GA.

552 4.4.6.6 Polity Committee

553 The Polity Committee shall oversee amendments to the Book of
554 Church Order and offer their expert advice to the GA and its
555 committees on any matter pertaining to the Book of Church Order.
556 When a particular decision is required on the proper interpretation and
557 application of the Book of Church Order, the Polity Committee shall
558 make a ruling that shall stand until the next GA meeting. At the next
559 GA meeting, the GA must vote whether to uphold or override the
560 ruling. This shall be done by a simple majority vote. The ruling must
561 be submitted as a Polity Committee report to the GA. The Polity
562 Committee will also develop Recommendations and Requirements for
563 itself as needed. These must be ratified by the GA.

564 4.4.6.7 Theology Committee

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

577 4.4.7 Forming New Committees

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

581 4.4.8 Removal of Committee Members

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

596 **5 Fidelity of Our Partnership**

597 **5.1 Confession of Faith**

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

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

607 **5.2 Ordination Recommendations and Requirements**

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

618 **5.3 Church Discipline**

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

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

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

⁶¹ Eph 4:7–12.

⁶² 1 Cor 5:6-8.

⁶³ 1 Cor 5:1.

⁶⁴ 1 Cor 5:5.

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

636 **6 Fruitfulness of Our Partnership**

637 **6.1 Church Health**

638 6.1.1 Cooperation

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

648 6.1.2 Mediation Assistance

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

656 6.1.3 Abuse and Reporting Recommendations and Requirements in TFC

657 6.1.3.1 TFC Churches in the US

658 Church health must also include at least some statement about abuse
659 and reporting standards. A full statement of our Abuse
660 Recommendations and Requirements will be created by an ad-hoc
661 Committee of the General Assembly within 24 months of the
662 formation of TFC.

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

667 Elders and staff members in TFC churches and staff of TFC itself are
668 mandatory reporters. They must report if a minor is believed to be at
669 risk of abuse or neglect. The elder or staff member might hear about a
670 minor currently at risk and must report this. Or, they might hear from
671 an adult about his/her abuse where the abuser is still in a position to
672 harm minors. In either case, TFC elders and church staff, and TFC
673 employees must report this to the proper civil authorities.

674 Along with mandatory reporting, TFC is committed to pursuing best
675 practices for background checks and training. Member churches shall
676 ensure that rigorous background checks are performed for all elders,
677 church employees, and any volunteers who work with minors. TFC
678 churches also require in-depth training according to best practices for
679 their elders, employees, and those who work with minors.
680 Additionally, all TFC staff shall be similarly trained and vetted.

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

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

694 6.1.3.2 TFC Churches Outside the US

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

698 6.1.4 Best Practices

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

704 **6.2 Pastoral Health**

705 6.2.1 Relationships

706 TFC will thrive according to the depth of relationships among its pastors and
707 church members. While formal organization and agreement are necessary, it
708 serves as a structure around which to build meaningful and, Lord willing,
709 lifelong relationships for the sake of Christ and his Church. Therefore, we urge
710 all TFC elders to make it their personal goal to build strong relationships
711 around this fellowship of churches. These relationships should be strongest
712 among Cohorts and regions but should also exist across the entire
713 denomination and the various geographical and cultural contexts within our
714 fellowship.

715 6.2.2 Training & Mentoring

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

722 6.2.3 Best Practices

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

727 6.2.3.1 Repositioning or Removal of an Elder for Non-Disciplinary Reasons

728 The General Assembly of Elders is comprised of one representative
729 elder from each TFC church. There may be various situations wherein
730 an eldership decides to either reposition an elder to a different role
731 within their eldership or to remove him from the eldership
732 for various reasons of team fit, competence, gifting, or even due to
733 budgetary or scheduling realities. Not all removal or repositioning of
734 an elder is considered disciplinary in nature, nor do all situations
735 involving the removal or repositioning of an elder involve character
736 disqualification. All eldership disciplinary situations are covered in
737 BCO-8 and the RRDA. In non-disciplinary cases, elderships should
738 consult the Church Development Committee and the relevant
739 Recommendations and Requirements they generate on the topic. Such
740 removal or repositioning should ensure the elder is well cared for in
741 the process and has recourse to appeal to the JRC should he believe he
742 has been treated unjustly. Any elder removed for non-disciplinary
743 reasons who remains qualified as an elder and a member in good
744 standing may retain his ordination certification from TFC for at least
745 one year but no more than three years. Only individuals actively
746 serving as a local elder in a TFC church may vote in a Regional
747 Assembly or in the General Assembly.

748 .

749 6.2.4 Accountability

750 There is a significant amount of help offered by the various forms and
751 commitments formalized in TFC. However, the ongoing relational
752 accountability of TFC may do more to ensure fidelity and fruitfulness than all
753 these formal structures. We, therefore, encourage all TFC elders to form vital
754 relationships among themselves that include regular confession, prayer, and
755 care for each other in the various temptations and struggles that come with

756 following Christ and pastoring while opposed by the world, the flesh, and the
757 devil. The Cohorts are an excellent context for this sort of ongoing
758 accountability.

759 **6.3 Evangelism**

760 6.3.1 Resources

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

769 6.3.2 Cooperation

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

776 **6.4 Church Planting**

777 6.4.1 Resources

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

781 6.4.2 Cooperation

782 Cohorts, regions, and the entirety of TFC should partner together to advance
783 church planting. This should include but not be limited to sponsoring
784 internships, sending church planters to other churches, funding the training and
785 development of church planters, donating to new church plants, and sending
786 members of the church to be a part of a church plant.

787 6.4.3 Processes

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

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

797 **6.5 New Church Partnerships**

798 6.5.1 Resources

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

803 6.5.2 Cooperation

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

811 6.5.3 Processes

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

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

818 **6.6 Global Missions**

819 6.6.1 Background

820 TFC exists to help fulfill the Great Commission's call to make disciples of all
821 nations. We recognize that we do so alongside a long line of faithful and
822 fruitful churches, missionaries, and agencies laboring throughout the world
823 over many years. Therefore, we do not seek to operate independently or
824 originally in our efforts. We seek to cooperate with any and all churches,
825 missionaries, and agencies that will mutually benefit our efforts to fulfill the
826 Great Commission. We prioritize efforts aimed at planting viable indigenous-

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827 led churches among the least-reached peoples of the world with the hope they
828 will become part of TFC or a like-minded association of churches.⁶⁵

829 6.6.2 Activities

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

⁶⁵ 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/>

839 **7 Trinity Fellowship Churches Commitments**

840 **7.1 Provisions for Initial Fifteen Months**

841 Until such time that the General Assembly deems appropriate, the normal time
842 requirements for introducing nominations, motions, amendments, and any other duties
843 of the Cohorts, Regions, and General Assembly may be waived at the discretion of
844 such bodies. This is given to allow for flexibility in implementing the normal function
845 of these bodies. *Confession of Faith* changes, BCO changes, and the nomination and
846 election of Committee members and chairmen may be performed immediately at the
847 appropriate meetings. During this time, implementations of Cohorts and Regions may
848 be delayed as needed. Additionally, the General Assembly may vote to include non-
849 member elders and experts as part of the various committees. Also, the General
850 Assembly may form ad-hoc committees or a committee-of-the-whole or ask certain
851 committees to assume duties not normally performed by the respective committees.
852 These temporary provisions are given in order to best facilitate the health and growth
853 of TFC in its early stages.

854 **7.2 Interim TFC Partnership Agreement**

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

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The Initial Agreement:

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

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

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

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

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

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Church: _____

889 **7.3 Terminating a Partnership**

890 7.3.1 Principle

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

901 7.3.2 Process

902 7.3.2.1 If a church is considering leaving TFC, its elders should contact the
903 Regional Chairman and discuss its reasons with him prior to reaching
904 a final decision.

905 7.3.2.2 If the local church, through its elders, decides to pursue separation, its
906 elders must notify their RA in writing of their decision of intent to
907 withdraw from TFC.

908 7.3.2.3 At least 30 days prior to withdrawal, the elders of that local church
909 shall appear before the Judicial Review Committee of their RA in
910 order to give reason(s) for leaving.

911 7.3.2.4 The Judicial Review Committee of that RA shall, for the good of the
912 local church and our union, examine in earnest the reasons stated for
913 leaving.

914 7.3.2.5 If the Judicial Review Committee accepts the reasons for withdrawal
915 to be valid, then the JRC will recommend to the RA of Elders that the
916 local church be commended to the Lord and his grace and freed to
917 leave without censure. Valid reasons include, e.g., a non-heretical
918 disagreement with the TFC Confession of Faith, a theological
919 inability to submit to the explicit mandates of the TFC Book of
920 Church Order, or a practical inability to participate in the partnership
921 of TFC.

922 7.3.2.6 If the Judicial Review Committee finds that the eldership of the
923 departing church is (a) heretical (i.e., its errors present a grave and
924 immediate threat to the spiritual welfare of church members), (b)
925 guilty of unrepented scandalous sin, (c) has engaged in blatantly
926 divisive and destructive behavior (i.e., explicitly making/condoning
927 charges against TFC members outside of the appropriate church

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928 judicatories), then the JRC shall propose to the GA a censure against
929 the eldership stating the reasons why it believes the departure is
930 wrong.

931 7.3.2.7 If the Judicial Review Committee finds that an eldership is departing
932 for reasons which do not honor the gravity of ecclesiastical union, it
933 may propose to the RA the issue of a comment which neither censures
934 nor commends the eldership's decision. Under such circumstances, the
935 JRC and the RA are advised to exercise charity and restraint.

936 7.3.2.8 After hearing the Judicial Review Committee's proposal, the RA shall
937 determine, by a simple majority vote, whether to commend, censure,
938 or simply comment upon the local church's departure.

939 7.3.2.9 A copy of the commendation, censure or comment will be sent to all
940 elderships in TFC for them to communicate to their congregations as
941 they deem appropriate.

942 **7.3.3 Appeals**

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

948 **8 Discipline**

949 **8.1 General Principles**

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

955 8.1.1 Church discipline is given by Christ to his Church to promote the glory of
956 Christ, godliness, and purity,⁶⁷ to provide a venue for the possible rescue of
957 members who have become hardened by sin,⁶⁸ and to provide justice,
958 correction, and protections between members during conflict.⁶⁹

959 8.1.2 At every level (local, regional, etc.), discipline within TFC is to be organized
960 and carried out in a consistent manner by ordained TFC elders as outlined in
961 the *TFC Recommendations and Requirements for Discipline and Adjudication*
962 (RRDA). Each church must ensure that there is full compliance in printed
963 words (e.g., church handbooks, policies, by-laws) and in deeds (e.g., actual
964 adjudications and church disciplinary hearings).

965 8.1.3 Before any disciplinary actions are taken, appropriate efforts to draw members
966 to healthy and peaceable interactions and reconciliation should be pursued if
967 possible (e.g., through mediation, etc., see BCO 2.3).

968 8.1.4 This section assumes that the laws of all relevant civil authorities apply and is
969 in no way intended to supersede or counteract such laws. Whether or not civil
970 law requires, all TFC elders and staff are mandatory reporters as outlined in
971 BCO 6.1.3.

972 **8.2 Reconciliation, Mediation and Conflict Resolution**

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

⁶⁶ Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-6:8; etc.

⁶⁷ 1 Cor. 5:7-8

⁶⁸ Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 5:5

⁶⁹ 1 Cor. 6:1-8

⁷⁰ Eph. 4:1-3; Phi. 2:1-5

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

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

984 **8.3 Witnesses and Evidence**

985 8.3.1 General principles

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

999 In all proceedings, extra care must be taken to ensure that all parties involved
1000 in the adjudication (plaintiff, defendant, accuser, potential victim, witnesses,
1001 etc.) are treated fairly and are afforded all necessary protections and care
1002 dynamics.⁷² Victims of physical or sexual abuse are neither required nor
1003 advised to meet face-to-face with their abuser.

1004 8.3.2 Credibility

1005 Credibility is the veracity that might be applied to the word and character of a
1006 witness. When discerning a witness's credibility, the adjudicating elders may
1007 take into consideration anything that might reflect on the witness's truthfulness
1008 in testimony. Their consideration might include the witness's relationship and
1009 history with the accused and/or other witnesses, their quality of understanding
1010 and insight into the matters on hand, their tone and demeanor while making
1011 accusations, the tested quality of their life and standing in fellowship, and what
1012 they seek to gain from the outcome.

1013 8.3.2.1 Witnesses of Character

1014 Extra prudence is required whenever the plaintiff or a supporting
1015 witness is known to:

1016 8.3.2.1.1 Harbor ill will or a vengeful spirit against the defendant

1017 8.3.2.1.2 Be hasty in judgment or quick to accuse

1018 8.3.2.1.3 Lack integrity

⁷² 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.

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- 1019 8.3.2.1.4 Have a reputation for dishonesty
1020 8.3.2.1.5 Be under discipline or a process of discipline themselves
1021 8.3.2.1.6 Possess a conflict of interest or would benefit from the
1022 defendant being found guilty
- 1023 8.3.3 Admissibility⁷³
1024 Witnesses and evidence that are put forward during an adjudication must meet
1025 one of the following criteria in order to be admissible:
- 1026 8.3.3.1 There are at least one or two other credible witnesses who have
1027 registered similar relevant and reliable concerns.⁷⁴
- 1028 8.3.3.2 There are at least two pieces of clear evidence produced that would
1029 lead to a just cause for the accusation to be admitted for a hearing.
- 1030 8.3.3.3 There is one piece of evidence that cannot be contrived and is beyond
1031 a reasonable doubt in the estimation of the Moderator and/or panel
1032 (e.g., video or audio footage, court records from a court of law,
1033 official police report).
- 1034 8.3.3.4 Evidence needed to determine guilt must be clear and convincing.
1035 This means that the guilt of the party is highly likely, though not
1036 necessarily beyond a reasonable doubt. This is the second highest
1037 level of evidence used in establishing guilt.⁷⁵

1038 **8.4 Local Church Discipline**

- 1039 8.4.1 Elderships are to maintain local church discipline as shown in Scripture as a
1040 necessary and ongoing part of church leadership for the health of the church
1041 and for God's glory. Church discipline should be enacted whenever a believer
1042 is caught in serious sin,⁷⁶ and the steps of discipline (Matt. 18) should
1043 commence forward as the person demonstrates a clear lack of repentance and
1044 response to the intervention and care of the church (i.e., “not listening”). Each
1045 church should have an established and documented church discipline policy.
1046 Each church in TFC should provide biblical teaching on the biblical principles
1047 of church discipline. No person should be allowed to join a TFC church
1048 without agreeing to abide by and submit to their local church discipline

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

⁷⁴ See Appendix 3 of the RRDA

⁷⁵ 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.

⁷⁶ Titus 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10

1049 processes. Each church should inform its members of the appeal processes for
1050 adjudications.⁷⁷

1051 8.4.2 Ordained elders are to oversee church discipline. Only ordained elders are to
1052 adjudicate in church discipline cases. In cases where there are not enough
1053 elders present locally to comprise an adjudicatory panel, the Region will
1054 supply the needed ordained elders.

1055 8.4.3 The steps outlined in Matthew 18:15-20 should be followed carefully and
1056 privacy protected for all involved. The initial steps are private, informal, and
1057 gradual. The discipline moves forward in the steps and becomes formal if the
1058 elders uphold the veracity of the charge(s), and the person continues to be
1059 unrepentant. The steps of church discipline should be as follows:

1060 8.4.3.1 **First step:** “Go tell him his fault, between you and him alone” (Matt.
1061 18:15). If a church member confesses to or is caught in serious sin or
1062 commits a sin against another believer, the person sinned against or
1063 who is witness to or has evidence of their brother's sin(s), in most
1064 cases, approaches the brother in private, bringing their evidence and
1065 appeals to repentance.

1066 8.4.3.2 **Second step:** “If he doesn't listen, take one or two others along with
1067 you” (v. 16). If the attempt to privately exhort the accused brother is
1068 met with a refusal to listen (i.e., unrepentant refusal to comply with
1069 concerns), then the person who was sinned against or who witnessed
1070 sin(s) or has evidence of the brother's sin involves other church
1071 members (one or more), including the local church elders. If the
1072 elders uphold the veracity of the charge(s) and the person continues to
1073 be unrepentant, this process transitions from informal to formal
1074 church discipline. This step results in the widening of the circle of
1075 people involved to bring appropriate credibility to the concerns and
1076 additional loving appeals to the brother caught in sin. At times, this
1077 step will result in reconciliation due to repentance or due to the
1078 correcting of the misjudgment of the accusing party, as the “one or
1079 two others” involved bring increased objectivity.

1080 8.4.3.3 **Third step:** “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church” (v.
1081 17a). Should the unrepentant brother refuse to comply with the
1082 concerns and calls to repentance from the widening circle of church
1083 members involved in seeking to help restore him, then the broader
1084 church gets involved in a meaningful way to provide further
1085 objectivity and aid to the concerns of the persons' involved in seeking
1086 the accused brother's restoration. This third step will be some variant

⁷⁷ See RRDA 5.1.3

1087 of a final call to the unrepentant brother from the church under the
1088 directive of elders.

1089 8.4.3.4 **Final step:** “If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to
1090 you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (v. 17b). The final step, known
1091 as “excommunication,” occurs when the person who has been proven
1092 as unrepentant through the first three steps of church discipline is now
1093 removed from the church and is no longer a member in good standing.
1094 That individual is to be treated as a non-Christian, as their behavior
1095 and their profession are inconsistent – they are bearing bad fruit like
1096 an unbeliever. Therefore, the church will relate differently to the
1097 excommunicated person, no longer offering them the Christian
1098 fellowship that being members together once held before the church
1099 discipline process was necessary.

1100 8.4.4 At every point during church discipline, the goal is one of merciful reclamation
1101 and repentance.⁷⁸ This goal should be demonstrated at all points through the
1102 tone and content of communication. Even if ending with excommunication, the
1103 process of discipline should always leave room for future repentance and
1104 restoration. It is the duty of elderships to decide when to readmit the penitent to
1105 the fellowship of the church.⁷⁹ It is the duty of congregants to forgive, comfort,
1106 and reaffirm their love for such a one.⁸⁰

1107 8.4.5 If an eldership refuses to hear charges of a doctrinal or publicly scandalous
1108 nature and two other elderships file charges with the TFC Judicial Review
1109 Committee, the JRC shall commence an investigation that may lead to
1110 adjudications.

1111 8.4.6 Appeals to judgments rendered in church discipline hearings may be appealed
1112 to the TFC JRC and the Court of Appeals along the established channels
1113 provided in section 42 of the *RRDA*.

1114 8.5 Discipline of Elders

1115 8.5.1 Due Process

1116 At times there will be accusations made towards an elder within TFC, or an
1117 elder may be caught in sin or confesses to a serious moral failure. It is at these
1118 times that a particular process should be enacted that is commensurate to the
1119 office they fill. Scripture commands that we treat elders in particular ways
1120 under these conditions. For any accusation brought to an eldership concerning
1121 one or more of their elders, care must be taken in processing the credibility of
1122 witnesses/evidence in obedience to 1 Tim. 5:19, which states, “Do not admit a
1123 charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

⁷⁸ Galatians 6:1-2

⁷⁹ 2 Cor. 2:6-8

⁸⁰ 2 Cor. 2:7-8

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1124 Local elders are to decide whether evidence or witness testimonies are
1125 credible, as it is only through the governing officers of the church that
1126 accusations are evaluated and determined as admissible. If there are no other
1127 corroborating witnesses or clear pieces of evidence provided, the accusations
1128 may be dismissed.

1129 Should an elder confess to serious sin or even be accused of such sins, either
1130 the accused elder or the other local elders shall immediately contact their
1131 Regional Leader and the Chairman of the Judicial Review Committee for the
1132 purpose of seeking counsel and possible aid in complying with the RRDA in
1133 the adjudication process.

1134 The care taken in processing any accusations against an elder is both to protect
1135 the church against wayward elders and to protect elders against wayward
1136 church members. A proper due process will balance both of these concerns and
1137 will require that:

1138 8.5.1.1 Accusations must be made within two years of the offense(s).
1139 Notwithstanding this requirement, any allegation involving sexual
1140 misconduct or illegal activity may be brought without timeframe
1141 limitation.

1142 8.5.1.2 The accused elder has the right to face his accuser(s) unless the
1143 charge stems from a minor.

1144 8.5.2 Grounds for Discipline of an Elder

1145 The grounds of the accusation must be upon a documented and serious breach
1146 of sound doctrine (as outlined in the *TFC Confession of Faith*) or an offense
1147 that would disqualify an elder from their office.⁸¹ See RRDA 6.5.4 for the
1148 outline of admissible charges.

1149 8.5.3 Results of adjudications

1150 Results will be one of the following: Cleared of charges, private rebuke, public
1151 rebuke, removal from office, church discipline, all as further outlined in the
1152 *RRDA*.

1153 8.5.4 Suspension of Elders

1154 Should an elder be accused of serious criminal or scandalous sin, the remaining
1155 elders may, at their own discretion, temporarily suspend the accused elder from
1156 his office and its duties with or without pay until an adjudicatory panel rules on
1157 the matter. In a case where the eldership decides to suspend pay, if the elder is
1158 ultimately cleared of the charges, he must receive his withheld pay in full. Two
1159 unaccused elders are required to approve this action. If there are not two
1160 remaining unaccused elders, the JRC will supply the necessary elders for the

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

1161 adjudicatory panel. In the situation where there is only one elder, and he is the
1162 accused, the Region will assume responsibility for the care of the church. The
1163 Regional Leader will coordinate that care. The financial assets of the church
1164 remain under the control of the local church officers or their delegates.

1165 8.5.4.1 Charges against an Eldership

1166 Should the actions or decisions of an entire eldership create grounds for an
1167 admissible charge (BCO 8.5.2), the charge may be brought by an individual,
1168 individual elder, or another eldership as outlined in *RRDA* 6 & 7. Additionally,
1169 persistent failure to uphold the requirements of the TFC BCO or the TFC
1170 Partnership Agreement is also a ground for charges against an eldership.

1171 Should an entire eldership be removed and their local church members desire
1172 to remain in partnership with TFC, they should consult the Chairman of the
1173 Church Partnerships Committee (information found at
1174 info@TrinityFellowshipChurches.com).

1175 **8.6 Judicial Review Committees**

1176 8.6.1 Appointment of the Judicial Review Committee

1177 The Regional Assembly will install a *minimum* of five elders to the Judicial
1178 Review Committee.⁸² The JRC will provide the necessary adjudicatory body
1179 for all appeals and adjudications that rise beyond the scope of a local eldership
1180 and will provide counsel to local elderships in their own adjudications.

1181 Members of the Judicial Review Committee will serve six-year terms with no
1182 term limits. If an elder resigns before his term is up, the Region nominates,
1183 votes, and then appoints a replacement for the duration of the term, pending
1184 confirmation from the RA by simple majority vote.

1185 The JRC will be maintained as a minimum of five elders in a Region,
1186 preferably from different churches, with each case heard by three members of
1187 the committee. Men are assigned to a case through a blind draw. An elder may
1188 be exempted from inclusion in a case for various reasons, from time constraints
1189 to conflicts of interest. If necessary, JRC members may be shared between
1190 regions serving on adjudication panels if approved by both regions.

1191 8.6.2 Powers and Responsibilities of the Judicial Review Committee

1192 8.6.2.1 The Judicial Review Committee should serve as a resource for
1193 informal counsel to elderships walking through a 1 Timothy 5:19-21

⁸² See BCO 4.2.5

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- 1194 proceeding at the local level. This is to ensure that the procedural
1195 elements of discipline are followed.
- 1196 8.6.2.2 A local eldership should not publicly rebuke or remove an elder
1197 without the involvement of the Judicial Review Committee.
- 1198 8.6.2.3 In these instances, the JRC is not weighing in on the guilt or
1199 innocence of the elder but assisting in ensuring that a fair and just
1200 process has been carried out according to the procedures spelled out
1201 in the *RRDA*.
- 1202 8.6.2.4 The Judicial Review Committee will also serve as a body of appeal
1203 for church members who have been disciplined or removed from
1204 membership. The JRC must hear the appeal of any excommunicated
1205 member if it is made within the allotted time frame through the
1206 appropriate channels (See *RRDA* 42).
- 1207 8.6.2.5 If a charge is brought against an elder but is not admitted by the
1208 Moderator, the person bringing the charge may appeal to the Judicial
1209 Review Committee. The JRC will determine whether or not the case
1210 shall be heard by the local Panel.
- 1211 8.6.2.6 The Judicial Review Committee will be a place of appeal for any
1212 elder who is removed by a local Panel. The JRC must hear the appeal
1213 of any trial decision regarding an elder at the local level (if the appeal
1214 is made within the allotted time frame). This result will be a binding
1215 decision in which the elder in question is cleared of charges, privately
1216 or publicly rebuked, or removed from office.⁸³
- 1217 8.6.2.7 The Judicial Review Committee will serve as the original adjudicating
1218 body for the trial of an accused elder in the case where a local
1219 eldership is too small to adequately deal with the matter. In such a
1220 case, the TFC Court of Appeals would handle any further appeal.
- 1221 8.6.2.8 A local panel has the recourse of appeal to the TFC Court of Appeals
1222 should they disagree with any judgment by the JRC that overturns
1223 their prior verdict. However, the decision of the JRC should be
1224 enacted, even while the appeals process continues.
- 1225 8.6.2.9 When the JRC has the original jurisdiction in the case of an accused
1226 elder when the local eldership is too small to adequately deal with the
1227 matter, once their Panel renders a decision, the execution of that
1228 decision shall be the exclusive responsibility of the unaccused local

⁸³ Such decisions are binding by the authority of this partnership of churches. In TFC, where authority is delegated to denominational leaders, such as in the JRC, it is nonetheless a real authority within our partnership.

1229 elder(s). Should there be no unaccused elders, the execution of the
1230 decision shall be the exclusive responsibility of the JRC.

1231 8.6.2.10 Charges Against Denominational Leaders and Committee Members

1232 8.6.2.10.1 Charges against denominational leaders that generally
1233 pertain to their qualification as elders will be handled
1234 according to the usual chain of jurisdiction for an elder:
1235 local Panel, Judicial Review Committee, TFC Court of
1236 Appeals.

1237 8.6.2.10.2 Each committee will have specific agreed-upon
1238 responsibilities, policies, and procedures, including the
1239 circumstances that are appropriate to the removal of an
1240 elder from a committee (BCO 4.4.3 et al.)

1241 8.6.2.11 Removal of a Church from TFC due to BCO noncompliance

1242 Any church that willfully, demonstrably, and consistently fails to
1243 comply with the explicit mandates of the BCO over the period of two
1244 or more years may be removed from the partnership per the decision
1245 of the JRC following the trial procedures outlined in the RRDA.

1246 **8.7 The Court of Appeals**

1247 8.7.1 Candidates for the TFC Court of Appeals are drawn from the members of the
1248 Regional Judicial Review Committees. They shall be nominated by any three
1249 GA members. Nominations shall be submitted to GA members at least 30 days
1250 before meeting. They shall be elected by popular vote according to BCO 3.2.
1251 Members of the TFC Court of Appeal are Appellate Elders. These Appellate
1252 Elders will be appointed to six-year terms, with no term limits.

1253 8.7.2 The number of Jurists will correspond to the number of Regions. The
1254 minimum number of jurists shall be 5. If there are not enough regions,
1255 additional jurists may be drawn from any region to make up the minimum. The
1256 General Assembly may appoint additional jurists to serve on the Court of
1257 Appeals on an ad-hoc basis by special meeting with at least a 15-day notice.
1258 Such jurists need only serve for the current adjudicatory issue. Any two GA
1259 delegates may call for such a special meeting in this case. Voting for ad-hoc
1260 Appellate Elders may be done electronically and remotely.

1261 8.7.3 When a case is appealed, three Jurists will be assigned to determine whether
1262 they will hear the case.

1263 8.7.4 When an appeal is heard by the TFC Court of Appeals, the Appellate Elders
1264 from the Region in which the charge originated will recuse themselves in order
1265 to prevent conflict of interest. Should there be insufficient Appellate Elders,
1266 Appellate Elders from the respective Region may serve if they did not

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- 1267 previously serve as elders in the particular case. Additionally, Appellate Elders
1268 appointed per BCO 8.7.3 may serve.
- 1269 8.7.5 A blind draw will be used to assign three Jurists to a case.
- 1270 8.7.6 Responsibilities of the TFC Court of Appeals
- 1271 8.7.6.1 The Court of Appeals shall conduct all adjudications according to the
1272 *RRDA*.
- 1273 8.7.6.2 The TFC Court of Appeals has the right to review or not review any
1274 appeal of a case that has previously been decided by a Regional
1275 Judicial Review Committee. Any decision of a Regional Judicial
1276 Review Committee may be appealed up to the TFC Court of Appeals
1277 by either party to the decision, by an eldership, or by a Panel whose
1278 judgment has been overruled.
- 1279 8.7.6.3 In any case where the Regional Judicial Review Committee has
1280 assumed original jurisdiction for a local church case and conducted a
1281 trial, the TFC Court of Appeals must hear the case if it is appealed.
1282 The TFC Court of Appeals may not decline to hear such a case.
- 1283 8.7.6.4 The Court has the right to uphold or overturn the decision of a
1284 regional court and is not bound to grant another trial.
- 1285 8.7.6.5 Censure or Removal of a Region from TFC
- 1286 8.7.6.5.1 Circumstances requiring the censure or removal of a
1287 Region include:
- 1288 8.7.6.5.1.1 *Persistent deviation from the TFC Statement of Faith*
- 1289 8.7.6.5.1.2 *Persistent divisive behavior (e.g., making or condoning*
1290 *charges against TFC members outside of the appropriate*
1291 *judicatories)*
- 1292 8.7.6.5.1.3 *Unrepentant sin on the part of the elders*
- 1293 8.7.6.5.1.4 *Persistent failure to uphold the TFC BCO or the TFC*
1294 *Partnership Agreement*
- 1295 8.7.6.5.2 Charges against a region must be brought by the lesser of
1296 either ten members or twenty-five percent of the General
1297 Assembly. Elders and elderships within a Region which
1298 register their dissent against the position or action of the
1299 Region will be exempted from censure or removal.
- 1300 8.7.6.5.3 If the TFC Court of Appeals decides to hear charges
1301 brought against a region, then after any necessary recusals,
1302 a blind draw will be used to assign five elders to the case. If
1303 less than five Jurists remain after recusals, then all of them
1304 shall try the case.

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- 1305 8.7.6.5.4 The TFC Court of Appeals will render one of the following
1306 judgments: Not Guilty or Censure or Removal.
- 1307 8.7.6.5.5 If the judgment is for censure, the General Assembly will
1308 finalize or overturn the decision by a simple majority vote.
- 1309 8.7.6.5.6 If the judgment is for removal, a two-thirds majority vote
1310 by the General Assembly will finalize the decision of the
1311 TFC Court of Appeals.
- 1312 8.7.6.5.7 If the judgment of the TFC Court of Appeals is not upheld
1313 by a two-thirds majority, it will immediately initiate a
1314 simple majority vote by the General Assembly on whether
1315 to censure the Region.