

# **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.<sup>1</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

28 “in Christ,”<sup>5</sup> and to be a member of the Church is to be a living member of  
29 “the body of Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

30 1.1.3 Our Confession of Faith is Continuationist.

31 Being Continuationist, we affirm that we now live “in the last days” defined  
32 by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on “all flesh.”<sup>7</sup> Along with all Reformed  
33 Christians, we affirm the necessity of the Spirit’s work in regeneration and  
34 sanctification. Yet, as Continuationists, we also believe all the New Testament  
35 gifts<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>  
37 Such gifts are manifestations of God’s power for the revelation of his glory  
38 and the great blessing of his Church—and draw the lost into the kingdom of  
39 God. 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.”<sup>10</sup> These  
44 two genders possess differing but complementary roles in the family and in  
45 the church. In the family, the husband is the head and called to sacrificially  
46 love and honor his wife.<sup>11</sup> The wife is the suitable helper and called to love  
47 and submit to him.<sup>12</sup> The two are called to energetically support each other.<sup>13</sup>  
48 In the church, elders are to be male,<sup>14</sup> and Scripture says a woman is not “to  
49 teach or to exercise authority over a man.”<sup>15</sup> On deacons and gender, see  
50 BCO-2.5. Gender roles are never to be used as a basis for affirming any kind  
51 of superiority or inferiority but are to be a picture of a unity-in-diversity and

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<sup>5</sup> Eph 2:6–13.

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

<sup>7</sup> Acts 2:17–21.

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

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 12:7–11; 14:1.

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

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

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

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

<sup>14</sup> 1 Tim 3:1–7.

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

52 diversity-in-unity that glorifies our Creator and becomes a vivid display of the  
53 Church and her Savior.<sup>16</sup>

54 1.1.5 Our Confession of Faith is Baptist.

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

## 59 1.2 Connectional

60 We believe it is healthy, strategic, and safe for a church to be interdependent and  
61 connected with other congregations. We are, therefore, a fellowship of interconnected  
62 churches united in the Holy Spirit and committed to building relationships,  
63 developing healthy elderships and churches, adhering to our foundational documents,  
64 and pursuing mission.

65 1.2.1 Connected through the Holy Spirit

66 The Bible affirms that all Christians are part of the singular “body of Christ”  
67 with Christ as its head.<sup>18</sup> There might be “many parts” in this body, but there  
68 is only one body.<sup>19</sup> 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  
72 and God-honoring relationships consistent with what it means to be a part of  
73 the household of God.<sup>20</sup> We want sincerely and affectionately to regard one  
74 another as brothers and sisters in Christ and fellow workers and fellow  
75 soldiers and even be ministers to one another’s needs.<sup>21</sup> As we live out our  
76 Christian lives, we desire to bear one another’s burdens and build one another  
77 up and stir up one another to love and good works.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Eph 5:21–33.

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

<sup>18</sup> Eph 1:22–23.

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

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

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

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

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.

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 sending  
100 the Spirit.<sup>23</sup> In the same way, our triune God sends out the Church in mission.<sup>24</sup>

101 1.3.2 Missional Disciples

102 The Church plays a vital role in the fulfillment of the plan of God to reconcile all  
103 things together in Christ. Therefore, elders must seek to equip church members as  
104 disciples who engage Christ’s reign in all of their varied stewardships and vocations.<sup>25</sup>

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

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

<sup>25</sup> Eph 4:11–13.

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105 Such disciples proclaim the gospel, live fruitful lives of good works in all of life, make  
106 disciples, and serve the poor.<sup>26</sup>

### 107 1.3.3 Missional Churches

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

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

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

112 **2 Church Polity**

113 **2.1 Christ's Authority**

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

120 **2.2 The Nature and Context of Church Authority**

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

134 **2.3 Membership**

135 Each church is a defined gathering of local believers who profess biblical faith in  
136 Christ and demonstrate this faith in the preaching of and genuine obedience to his  
137 word and in the administration of the sacraments.<sup>33</sup> They are gathered together by

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

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

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

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

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

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

138 mutual agreement to serve as a local body of believers committed to stewarding the  
139 gospel, obeying the Scriptures, and advancing the mission of the church to make  
140 disciples of all peoples.

141  
142 They are to follow the biblical order of the local church by having elders to govern  
143 them and utilizing deacons in leading appropriate ministries of the local church.<sup>34</sup> The  
144 church, as elders, deacons, and members operates with true Christian unity, love, and  
145 discipline according to good biblical order. Elders exercise their authority given by  
146 Christ with the appropriate participation of the congregation. Numerous biblical texts  
147 indicate the congregation has an essential part to play alongside the elders'  
148 leadership.<sup>35</sup>

149  
150 TFC allows a degree of latitude in how churches practice congregational participation  
151 in decision making. In some churches, elders seek to include the congregation in key  
152 decision making through informal relational means, typical of a healthy relationship  
153 between a flock and its pastors. Other churches may choose to employ official votes of  
154 affirmation for key decisions such as church discipline, the ordination of an elder, the  
155 installation of a deacon, the endorsement of a yearly budget, and the approval of  
156 bylaw changes. TFC allows this latitude but also requires member churches to ensure  
157 that local practices and bylaws do not conflict with the mandates of this BCO.

## 158 **2.4 Elders<sup>36</sup>**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 182 **2.5 Deacons**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

190 to the biblical principles related to male and female roles being appropriately  
191 expressed in this office.<sup>46</sup>

## 192 **2.6 Discipline**

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

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

## 204 **2.7 Extra-Local Leaders**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

223 **3 Partnership**

224 **3.1 Scriptural Bases**

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

233 **3.2 The Nature and Extent of Our Partnership**

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

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

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

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<sup>51</sup> 1 Cor 12:12–20.

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

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

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

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

<sup>56</sup> Acts 15.

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

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

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

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

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

263 **4 Forms of Our Partnership**

264 **4.1 Cohorts**

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

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

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

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

289 The Cohort's prime goals are:

- 290 1. To build strong relationships among pastors and church members in the Cohort.
- 291 2. To encourage, care for, and mentor fellow pastors and pastoral candidates for  
292 optimal pastoral health.
- 293 3. To cooperate in church life and mission in a substantial way that best serves the  
294 Cohort churches.

295 **4.2 Regional Assemblies**

296 4.2.1 Overview

297 Regional Assemblies (RA) consist of duly ordained pastors from 5-100  
298 churches in a given cultural or geographic context. The Regional Assembly is  
299 where the more formal functions outlined in this section are accomplished  
300 such as Church Planting and Adoption decisions, Ordination Certifications,  
301 Regional Adjudications, and Financial decisions. The more relational aspects  
302 of our partnership shall be the responsibility of the Cohorts rather than the  
303 Regional Assemblies. Churches in the Region should consider giving up to  
304 4% of their general funds towards church planting and other efforts of the  
305 region.

306 4.2.2 Regional Assembly Meetings

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

311 4.2.3 Forming Regions

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

315 4.2.4 Regional Chairman

316 The RA shall elect one of their pastors to serve as chairman. The Regional  
317 Chairman is to provide leadership to the Region as a steward of the  
318 responsibilities and authority given to him by the Regional Assembly and its  
319 elders. Any three RA pastors can nominate a pastor to fill this role.  
320 Nominations shall be submitted to the RA 30 days before the election. The  
321 chairman is elected by popular vote. He shall serve a three-year term. He shall  
322 serve no more than two consecutive terms. The chairman will help to facilitate  
323 the function of the RA through communication, organization, and example.  
324 His primary responsibilities are to oversee the RA meetings and to ensure the  
325 healthy function of RA Committees in accordance with the BCO. The  
326 chairman shall moderate RA gatherings using rules chosen by the popular  
327 vote of the RA. The RA churches should consider how to best support the  
328 chairman in his efforts, including financial compensation, as needed.

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### 329 4.2.5 Regional Committees

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

#### 339 4.2.5.1 Regional Church Planting and Adoption Committee

340 Regional Assemblies shall elect a Regional Church Planting and  
341 Adoption Committee that is qualified to process and oversee all  
342 church plants and adoptions in their Region per Guidelines and  
343 Requirements for Church Plants and Adoptions. The Guidelines and  
344 Requirements for Church Plants and Adoptions are subject to the  
345 approval of the GA.

#### 346 4.2.5.2 Ordination Certification Committee

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

#### 352 4.2.5.3 Judicial Review Committee

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

#### 358 4.2.5.4 Regional Finance Committee

359 Regional Assemblies shall elect a qualified Regional Finance  
360 Committee that is trained and equipped in church finance to organize  
361 and present a yearly budget in their Region per the Guidelines and  
362 Requirements for Finance Committees. The Guidelines and

363 Requirements for Finance Committees are subject to the approval of  
364 the GA.

365 **4.3 General Assembly (GA)<sup>59</sup>**

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

372 4.3.1 Formation of Committees

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

379 4.3.2 Confession of Faith

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

385 4.3.3 Book of Church Order

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

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

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- 390           4.3.4 General Assembly Chairman
- 391           4.3.4.1 The GA shall elect a chairman annually from their own number. The  
392           Chairman must be an objective moderator without conflicts of  
393           interest in his role. He shall not be a voting member of the Oversight  
394           Committee nor paid staff for TFC.
- 395           4.3.4.2 The chairman shall be nominated by at least three GA members and  
396           elected by a popular vote (see BCO-3.2). Nominations for the GA  
397           Chairman must be submitted at least 30 days before the meeting of  
398           the GA and will be elected by the popular vote of the GA (see BCO-  
399           3.2).
- 400           4.3.4.3 The Chairman will moderate the following meeting of the GA using  
401           *Robert's Rules of Order* or an alternative set of rules approved by 2/3  
402           of the GA.
- 403           4.3.4.4 The Chairman will serve as the point of contact for organizing the  
404           agenda for the annual meeting and any special meetings of the GA.
- 405           4.3.4.5 Any three representatives may initiate a request for a special meeting  
406           through the Chairman to poll the GA in order to ascertain whether  
407           there is sufficient interest in a special meeting. The poll results shall  
408           be made available to all GA representatives.
- 409           4.3.5 Motions and Reports
- 410           The GA shall vote on any motions or reports brought by any committee or any  
411           three representatives. All motions and reports must be received by the GA  
412           representatives 30 days prior to meeting. Decisions on these motions and  
413           report responses will require a simple majority vote.
- 414           4.3.6 Contributions
- 415           The GA shall receive and manage contributions through the use of appropriate  
416           committees to promote the health and growth of TFC. All member churches  
417           are asked to give 2% of their annual general fund to this central fund, 4% of  
418           their church's general fund to regional functions and another 4% of their  
419           general fund to mission work of their choice, including regional and TFC-  
420           wide efforts in church planting and the global mission work of TFC.

421 4.3.7 Guidelines and Requirements

422 The GA shall approve all and any guidelines and requirements for any  
423 function of TFC. No funds will be spent nor any binding actions imposed  
424 apart from established guidelines, budgets, and requirements explicitly  
425 approved by the GA. Guidelines and requirements shall require a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority  
426 vote by the GA.

427 **4.4 Committees of the General Assembly<sup>60</sup>**

428 4.4.1 Overview of GA Committees

429 Committees shall consist of elders of TFC especially qualified for the duties  
430 of the respective committee. Committees may also contain exceptionally  
431 qualified members from the churches of TFC. Committees are tasked by the  
432 GA for specified purposes. Committees are to provide leadership to address  
433 specific goals as stewards of the responsibilities and authority given to them  
434 by the GA and its elders. They serve at the will of the GA and should orient  
435 themselves to best inform and equip the GA for making key decisions for  
436 TFC.

437 4.4.2 Appointments and Terms

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

446 4.4.3 Committee Chairmen

447 Each committee shall have a chairman who will serve to facilitate discussion,  
448 cooperation and the accomplishment of the committee's goals. Each Chairman  
449 must be an elder of TFC. Each committee chairman, except for the Oversight  
450 Committee, shall be nominated by any member of his respective committee  
451 and elected by popular vote of the members of his committee. Each GA

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<sup>60</sup> Note that the PCA and the SBC use a similar organizational structure and appear to be very faithful and fruitful in carrying out their goals. See <https://www.pcaac.org/what-we-do/> and <https://vimeo.com/224574483>, respectively.

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452 Committee chairman may serve up to three years before requiring re-election.  
453 No chairman may serve more than two consecutive terms.

454 4.4.4 Chairman of the Oversight Committee

455 The Chairman of the Oversight Committee shall be nominated by any three  
456 GA members. Nominations shall be submitted to GA members at least 30  
457 days before meeting. The Chairman shall be elected by popular vote to a  
458 three-year term. He shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. The  
459 Chairman will facilitate and coordinate the Oversight Committee’s activities  
460 and serve as the President of TFC.

461 4.4.5 Committee Reports

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

469 4.4.6 Permanent Committees

470 The following committees are permanent committees: Church Development  
471 Committee (CDC), Church Planting & Adoptions Committee (CPAC),  
472 Central Finance Committee (CFC), Global Missions Committee (GMC),  
473 Oversight Committee (OC), and Polity Committee (PC).

474  
475 Each of these permanent committees shall have members elected to a term of  
476 three years. They may recommend budgets to be overseen by the Finance  
477 Committee and presented to the GA and they may requisition and oversee  
478 staff as needed.<sup>61</sup> They shall all serve the GA in its decision-making authority.

479 4.4.6.1 Church Development Committee

480 The Church Development Committee shall work to establish  
481 Guidelines and Requirements related to pastoral ministry and church  
482 life. They shall steward the Guidelines and Requirements for

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

483 Ordination Certification, including introducing any needed  
484 amendments or commentary. They shall also develop and  
485 disseminate any resources helpful for pastoral and church  
486 development, life and mission. They shall organize and present  
487 appropriate conferences and seminars to best serve TFC. Their  
488 strategic plan for conferences and seminars must be approved by the  
489 GA before implementation. This plan shall be submitted as a report  
490 with appropriate motions to the GA.

491 4.4.6.2 Church Planting & Adoptions Committee

492 The Church Planting & Adoptions Committee shall oversee  
493 Guidelines and Requirements for the Church Planting and Adoption  
494 Committees in the Regions. The committee shall also develop and  
495 provide the necessary resources to support healthy and vigorous  
496 church planting and adoptions among the regions and beyond in  
497 TFC.

498 4.4.6.3 Finance Committee

499 The Finance Committee shall coordinate with all other committees  
500 and staff and all motions involving financial expenditure. They shall  
501 receive proposals and work with the various parties to present a  
502 unified budget to the GA for their approval. The Finance  
503 Committee's proposed budget shall be introduced as a committee  
504 report to be received, amended and approved at the GA annual  
505 meeting.

506 4.4.6.4 Global Missions Committee

507 The Global Missions Committee shall oversee Guidelines and  
508 Requirements for the Global Missions work. This is a critical aspect  
509 of our mission. Its role is to provide clarity for our elders and  
510 churches. The target for this committee is the *unreached* peoples of  
511 the earth<sup>62</sup>, while the Church Planting & Adoptions Committee will  
512 be concerned about church plants in areas being reached throughout  
513 the globe. They will research existing opportunities to help our local  
514 churches better steward the limited resources they have.

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

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### 515 4.4.6.5 Oversight Committee

516 The Oversight Committee shall work with all the various committees  
517 to present an orderly agenda for the GA annual meeting. They shall  
518 present their reasoned input in response to all committee reports.  
519 They shall ensure corporate ethical, legal and financial compliance  
520 for TFC and serve as the organizational board for non-profit law  
521 purposes. They shall steward the BCO and bylaws. The President and  
522 the Oversight Committee shall communicate for TFC by representing  
523 established values, documents, policies, and past, present, and  
524 planned activities. The committee may requisition and oversee staff  
525 to help accomplish their goals. This staff could include an Executive  
526 Administrator for TFC. Further Guidelines and Requirements for the  
527 Oversight Committee shall be ratified by the GA.

### 528 4.4.6.6 Polity Committee

529 The Polity Committee shall oversee amendments to the Book of  
530 Church Order and offer their expert advice to the GA and its  
531 committees on any matter pertaining to the Book of Church Order.  
532 When a particular decision is required on the proper interpretation  
533 and application of the Book of Church Order, the Polity Committee  
534 shall make a ruling that shall stand until the next GA meeting. At the  
535 next GA meeting, the GA must vote whether to uphold or override  
536 the ruling. This shall be done by a simple majority vote. The ruling  
537 must be submitted as a Polity Committee report to the GA. The  
538 Polity Committee will also develop Guidelines and Requirements for  
539 itself as needed. These must be ratified by the GA.

### 540 4.4.7 Forming New Committees

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

544 **5 Fidelity of Our Partnership**

545 **5.1 Confession of Faith**

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

552 Any pastor with exceptions to our Confession of Faith must be certified by the  
553 Regional Ordination Certification Committee according to our established Ordination  
554 Guidelines and Requirements.

555 **5.2 Ordination Guidelines and Requirements**

556 We help ensure fidelity by creating agreed-upon Ordination Guidelines and  
557 Requirements that allow us to certify an elder’s ordination. Elders are gifts from the  
558 ascended Jesus to local churches.<sup>63</sup> As such, it is the responsibility of local churches to  
559 recognize and steward the development of elder candidates. This includes all relevant  
560 training and experience followed by a methodical and clear ordination process.  
561 Ordination to the office of elder is a local church function that is certified by TFC. All  
562 TFC pastors will be certified for ordination by Ordination Guidelines and  
563 Requirements established by the GA of Elders and their respective committees. These  
564 Ordination Guidelines and Requirements will be approved by a 2/3 majority vote of  
565 the GA and will become binding for all TFC ordination certifications.

566 **5.3 Church Discipline**

567 Church discipline is an essential practice of the New Testament church that protects  
568 the purity of the church,<sup>64</sup> the witness of the church to the world,<sup>65</sup> and the salvation of  
569 genuine Christians.<sup>66</sup> Although a difficult function to perform, it is necessary for the  
570 good of the church, her mission, and the fame of Christ.

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

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<sup>63</sup> Eph 4:7–12.

<sup>64</sup> 1 Cor 5:6-8.

<sup>65</sup> 1 Cor 5:1.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Cor 5:5.

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

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

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

584 **6 Fruitfulness of Our Partnership**

585 **6.1 Church Health**

586 6.1.1 Cooperation

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

596 6.1.2 Mediation Assistance

597 The Regional Judicial Committees with help from any relevant GA  
598 committees should train select individuals in personal and church mediation.  
599 Additionally, the regions may choose to consult with and employ Christian  
600 ministries with the expertise in mediation to both train their pastors as well as  
601 provide needed mediation. Mediation is almost always a better choice for any  
602 church conflicts before adjudication is pursued.

603 6.1.3 Abuse and Reporting Guidelines and Requirements in TFC

604 6.1.3.1 TFC Churches in the US

605 Church health must also include at least some statement about abuse  
606 and reporting standards. A full statement of our Abuse Guidelines  
607 and Requirements will be created by the TFC Polity Committee  
608 within 12 months of the formation of TFC.

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

613 Elders and staff members in TFC churches and staff of TFC itself are  
614 mandatory reporters. Mandator reporters must make a report if they  
615 suspect abuse (physical or sexual) or neglect of a minor has occurred  
616 or will occur. The elder or staff member might hear about a minor  
617 currently at risk and must report this. Or, they might hear from an

618 adult about his/her abuse where the abuser is still in a position to  
619 harm minors. In either case, TFC elders and church staff and TFC  
620 employees must report this to the proper civil authorities.

621 Along with mandatory reporting, TFC is committed to pursuing best  
622 practices for background checks and training. Member churches shall  
623 ensure that rigorous background checks are performed for all elders,  
624 church employees, and any volunteers who work with minors. TFC  
625 churches also require in-depth training according to best practices for  
626 its elders, employees, and those who work with minors. Additionally,  
627 all TFC staff shall be similarly trained and vetted.

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

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

641 6.1.3.2 TFC Churches Outside the US

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

645 6.1.4 Best Practices

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

651 **6.2 Pastoral Health**

652 6.2.1 Relationships

653 TFC will thrive according to the depth of relationships among its pastors and  
654 church members. While formal organization and agreement is necessary, it  
655 serves as a structure around which to build meaningful and, Lord willing,  
656 lifelong relationships for the sake of Christ and his Church. Therefore, we  
657 urge all TFC pastors to make it their personal goal to build strong  
658 relationships around this fellowship of churches. These relationships should  
659 be strongest among Cohorts and regions but should also exist across the entire  
660 denomination and the various geographical and cultural contexts within our  
661 fellowship.

662 6.2.2 Training & Mentoring

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

669 6.2.3 Best Practices

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

674 6.2.4 Accountability

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

684 **6.3 Evangelism**

685 6.3.1 Resources

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

693 6.3.2 Cooperation

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

700 **6.4 Church Planting**

701 6.4.1 Resources

702 The Regional Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, in cooperation with  
703 the GA Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, shall develop and  
704 disseminate the resources needed for healthy and vigorous church planting in  
705 the regions.

706 6.4.2 Cooperation

707 Cohorts, regions, and the entirety of TFC should partner together to advance  
708 church planting. This should include but not be limited to sponsoring  
709 internships, sending church planters to other churches, funding the training  
710 and development of church planters, donating to new church plants, and  
711 sending members of the church to be a part of a church plant.

712 6.4.3 Processes

713 The GA Church Planting and Adoptions Committee shall develop and  
714 disseminate Guidelines and Requirements for church planting. These shall  
715 provide extensive detail for carrying out our church planting mission together.  
716 These shall include detailed processes for church planting and how the

717 particular aspects can be funded and supervised in partnership with regions  
718 and Cohorts.

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

## 721 **6.5 Church Adoptions**

### 722 6.5.1 Resources

723 The Regional Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, in cooperation with  
724 the GA Church Planting and Adoptions Committee, shall develop and  
725 disseminate the resources needed for healthy and vigorous church adoptions in  
726 the regions.

### 727 6.5.2 Cooperation

728 Cohorts, regions, and the entirety of TFC should partner together to advance  
729 church adoptions. This should include but not be limited to reaching out to  
730 candidate churches and pastors, including them in the various activities of our  
731 association, guiding them through the adoption process, inviting them to the  
732 various pastoral gatherings among Cohorts, regions, and the GA, and  
733 providing funds for the candidate church to participate in various TFC  
734 activities.

### 735 6.5.3 Processes

736 The GA Church Planting and Adoptions Committee shall develop and  
737 disseminate Guidelines and Requirements for church adoptions. These shall  
738 include detailed processes for church adoptions and how the particular aspects  
739 can be funded and supervised in partnership with regions and Cohorts.

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

## 742 **6.6 Global Missions**

### 743 6.6.1 Background

744 TFC exists to help fulfill the Great Commission's call to make disciples of all  
745 nations. We recognize that we do so alongside a long line of faithful and  
746 fruitful churches, missionaries, and agencies laboring throughout the world  
747 over many years. Therefore, we do not seek to operate independently or  
748 originally in our efforts. We seek to cooperate with any and all churches,

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749 missionaries, and agencies that will mutually benefit our efforts to fulfill the  
750 Great Commission. We prioritize efforts aimed at planting viable indigenous-  
751 led churches among the least-reached peoples of the world with the hope they  
752 will become part of TFC or a like-minded association of churches.<sup>67</sup>

### 753 6.6.2 Activities

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

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<sup>67</sup> Unreached peoples are historically defined as those ethnic groups with less than 2% who are evangelical Christians. See Zane Pratt, “Here’s What We Mean by Unreached Peoples and Places,” <https://www.imb.org/2016/11/22/what-do-we-mean-by-unreached-peoples-and-places/>

763 **7 Trinity Fellowship Churches Commitments**

764 **7.1 Provisions for Initial Six Months**

765 For the first six months of this partnership, the normal time requirements for  
766 introducing nominations, motions, amendments, and any other duties of the Cohorts,  
767 Regions, and General Assembly may be waived at the discretion of such bodies. This  
768 is given to allow for flexibility in implementing the normal function of these bodies.  
769 *Confession of Faith* changes, BCO changes, and the nomination and election of  
770 Committee members and chairmen may be performed immediately at the appropriate  
771 meetings. During this time, implementations of Cohorts and Regions may be delayed  
772 as needed. Additionally, the General Assembly may vote to include non-member  
773 elders and experts as part of the various committees. Also, the General Assembly may  
774 form ad-hoc committees or a committee-of-the-whole or ask certain committees to  
775 assume duties not normally performed by the respective committees. These temporary  
776 provisions are given in order to best facilitate the health and growth of TFC in its early  
777 stages.

778 **7.2 Interim TFC Partnership Agreement**

779 These commitments are made as an initial and interim agreement for the first two  
780 years of TFC. At the two-year mark, all churches in TFC will need to decide to  
781 commit to a long-term agreement to continue as a part of TFC. Such an agreement  
782 shall be prepared in time for all churches to process their decision at the two-year  
783 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 Guidelines and Requirements that are given for proper resignation from this partnership.*

*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: \_\_\_\_\_*

816 **8 Rules of Discipline**

817 TFC is committed to creating healthy structures for accountability and due processes that  
818 enable one party to bring charges against another party. Until a complete set of the Rules of  
819 Discipline and Rules of Procedure are created and ratified, these commitments will hold us:

820 **8.1 Charges Against an Elder**

821 The New Testament reminds us there must be a means to bring charges against an  
822 elder.<sup>68</sup> Such a process is both to protect the church against wayward elders and to  
823 protect elders against wayward church members. A proper due process will balance  
824 both of these concerns. Careful due process takes time and great attention, but these  
825 cannot be used as a method to delay justice.

826 **8.2 The Process**

827 8.2.1 The Panel

828 Three elders are required to adjudicate any charges against an individual,  
829 elder, eldership, church, Cohort, or Regional Assembly. These three elders are  
830 the Panel in the dispute. These elders will come from the local (uncharged)  
831 elders. If there are not three local uncharged elders, then the GA will assign  
832 additional elders as needed.

833 8.2.2 Receiving the Charge

834 Before an adjudication begins, the charge must be made and officially  
835 “received.” Not every grievance against a party is a legitimate charge. Elders  
836 must first weigh the charge(s) to see if there is sufficient weight for a trial.  
837 Weighing the charge(s) will involve interviews with the accuser and the  
838 accused and evaluating the evidence.

839 8.2.3 Organizing the Trial

840 After the charges are received, the Panel will organize the trial/adjudication.

841 8.2.4 The Trial

842 Adjudications will include opening and closing statements, the presentation of  
843 evidence (either documents or witness testimony) by both parties in the  
844 dispute, and a healthy exchange (along with cross-examination) that enables

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<sup>68</sup> 1 Tim 5:19–21; Tit 3:10; etc.

845 all relevant information to be heard by the Panel. Parties in the dispute may  
846 have help throughout the process as needed. This help is to protect due  
847 process, enable a full and impartial hearing of the evidence, and to create an  
848 environment where those less comfortable in such a formal situation can still  
849 adequately represent themselves.

850 8.2.5 The Decision

851 Once the trial concludes, the Panel will deliver its decision within 30 days.  
852 The decisions of these Panels are authoritative for the relevant parties  
853 involved. As such, they must be followed, or a censure will be given. These  
854 decisions can vary significantly from a declaration of “not guilty” with full  
855 restoration of the defendant to a recommendation for excommunication. An  
856 elder’s livelihood and reputation could be at stake, so great care must be taken  
857 in these trials. Yet, an elder’s actions can certainly require the just removal of  
858 the elder from office. Being an elder is a character profession, and thus when  
859 his character is proven deficient, he cannot continue to serve.

860 8.2.6 Appeals

861 Appeals of these decisions can be made. Until a full process is developed,  
862 these appeals will be made to the GA.