

## **Preamble.**

Trinity Church Denver believes that the Gospel of Jesus (the good news about his life, death, resurrection and reign over all things) transforms every facet of our lives, and that God's declared intention, in and through the Gospel as it is declared and embodied in the church, is the renewal of all things - including our city. In submission to Scripture, we confess the means by which we pursue this end is to glorify God through faithful worship, preaching of the Gospel, and pursuit of obedience to God individually and corporately. We commit ourselves to the outworking of God's work through covenant renewal worship (preaching and teaching of God's word and celebrating the sacraments), and discipleship. We believe that the Gospel is central to everything, the church is a family, Jesus reigns over the earth, we are marked by the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness, and we are seeking to glorify God and the objective good of our neighbors around us. Therefore, we establish the following constitution as we work to further the reign of Jesus in our city and abroad and to govern our church body for faithful pursuit of Christ and his will in our church while seeking to avoid unfaithful divisions that plague our modern age.

## **Statement of Faith**

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

With this in mind when this constitution refers to the Trinity Church Denver Statement of Faith it is referring to the book of confessions which consists of: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, The Definition of Chalcedon, The Athanasian Creed, the 39 Articles of Religion, The Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt, and the Westminster Confession of Faith. These confessions are to be used as specified in the Book of Confessions. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) serves as our confessional standard.

## **Membership**

Individuals are eligible for membership in Trinity Church Denver if they have been lawfully baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit ([Matt. 28:19](#)). Membership begins when the covenant membership vows have been taken (Philemon 2; [Heb. 13:7,17](#)). Membership for children of members begins when those children are baptized.

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Our membership vows are:

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

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

“Do you solemnly promise before God, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live in a way that becomes followers of Christ?”

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

When these vows are taken, the congregation will respond with “Amen” when they are asked: “As a congregation of Christ, do you receive [this Christian/these Christians] into the covenant fellowship of this local church together with you, renewing your membership vows as you do so?”

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

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

### **Election of Parish Elders**

A prospect for parish elder may be identified by the elders, by the members of his parish, by others in the congregation, or he may volunteer himself. The elders and deacons will discuss the prospects and narrow the list down as appropriate. The elder session will vote by  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority to initiate the candidacy of a qualified man. If the nominee has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church’s book of Confessions or this constitution, he must inform the elders of it. All prospects for elder must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture ([1 Tim. 3:1–7](#); [Tit. 1:5–9](#); [1 Pet. 5:2–4](#); [1 Tim. 3:8–13](#)). Once approved by the session, the nominee will work through a short course of training on eldership under the oversight of the current session. Upon completion of this course of study, the prospective elder will be presented to the congregation as a candidate for parish elder. Parish members will be informed of the candidate prior to his presentation to the congregation. Following completion of his studies, training, and practical application period, the session shall vote by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority to move ahead with ordination of the candidate. The man shall then be ordained before the congregation for a two year term through the laying on of hands and prayer.

At the end of a two year term, if he desires to continue serving the congregation, the parish elder must be reaffirmed by a two thirds majority vote of the parish households<sup>1</sup>. If elected, the elders will vote by  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority to extend his ordination for an additional five year term. If any member of the man's parish votes no and includes a reason for the no vote on the ballot, the elders must carefully weigh the scriptural merit of the objection before ordaining the elder elect.

After the subsequent five year term, if the elder wishes to continue his service, the parish elder must be reaffirmed by vote of the membership households<sup>1</sup>. If in this election, the candidate receives a three quarters majority of the congregational votes cast, the elders vote by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority to extend his ordination for life. If any elector votes no and includes a reason for the no vote on the ballot, the elders must carefully weigh the scriptural merit of the objection and meet as necessary with the electors who cast the no votes. If these conditions are met, the elders will extend the parish elder's ordination to a life-term through laying on of hands and prayer. If events warrant it, during an elder's term of office, the session may grant a leave of absence for a length of time specified at the time of the leave. If the leave of absence coincides with an elder election to renew or extend his term of service, his election may be postponed until the leave of absence is concluded.

### **Election of Teaching Elders**

A prospect for teaching elder may be identified by the elders, by the members of the congregation, or may volunteer himself. Once a man is presented for consideration, the elders will examine him for the office of teaching elder with regard to his giftedness for the role he will be adopting, his doctrine and his manner of life. If the nominee has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's book of Confessions or this constitution, he must inform the elders of it. All prospects for elder must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture ([1 Tim. 3:1-7](#); [Tit. 1:5-9](#); [1 Pet. 5:2-4](#); [1 Tim. 3:8-13](#)). Nominations are approved with a four-fifths majority of the elders. If these conditions are met, the elders will ordain the elder through the laying on of hands and prayer. Once ordained, the teaching elder will serve for life.

### **Election of Ministering Elders**

A prospect for ministering elder may be identified by the elders, by the members of the congregation, or may volunteer himself. Once a man is presented for consideration, the elders will examine him for the office of ministering elder with regard to his giftedness for preaching (in the case of a candidate for senior pastor), teaching, leadership, his doctrine and his manner of life. If the nominee has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's book of Confessions or this constitution, he must inform the elders of it. All prospects for elder must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture ([1 Tim.3:1-7](#); [Tit. 1:5-9](#); [1 Pet. 5:2-4](#)). Nominations are approved with a four-fifths majority of the elders.

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<sup>1</sup> \*household is defined as: 1) an emancipated single person (or single person whose spouse is unbelieving); 2) a husband and wife, or; 3) a husband and wife with children; who have taken vows of membership at Trinity Church Denver and who are in good standing.

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In addition to the qualifications for teaching elder, ministering elders must meet the biblical criteria for shepherd ([2 Samuel 12:1ff.](#), [Ps. 23](#), [John 10:11-16](#), etc.). Therefore, the nominee must also preach before the congregation (in the case of a candidate for senior pastor) and submit to a public interview before the members of the church. Following this process, the elders by a four-fifths majority may approve the nominee as the Ministering Elder.

### **Election of Deacons**

A prospect for deacon may be identified by the elders, by members of the congregation, or may volunteer themselves. Once identified as candidates for the office of deacon, they should be presented to their parish as such and opportunity given for any concerns to be raised concerning their nomination. After undergoing a succinct season of training for the office of deacon, the elders by a four-fifths majority may approve the nominee as a deacon. The elders will ordain him through laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6).

### **Duties of Elders**

Parish Elders oversee the discipleship and care of member households within their particular parish.

Teaching Elders are charged to faithfully teach and counsel the Scriptures in accordance with their particular calling within Trinity Church Denver.

The Ministering Elder is charged with overseeing the preaching and teaching of the Scriptures and, under the authority of the elders, providing directional leadership for the congregation and her mission as a whole.

The elders together are the session charged with primary responsibility for leading and pastoring the church.

### **Duties of Deacons**

Under the general oversight of the elders, the deacons manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church ([Acts 6:2-4](#)). Such responsibilities include administering the deacon's fund and addressing the physical needs of the church and seeking ways for the church to serve the needs of the community surrounding the church.

### **Church Staff**

All paid staff of Trinity Church Denver serve at the pleasure and discretion of the elder session. While organizational structure may provide direct oversight and direction to paid employees, all hiring and involuntary dismissals are to be approved by a simple majority of the elder session (excluding any individuals who may be recused on the basis of a conflict of interest).

## **Resignation of Elders or Deacons**

If an elder or deacon desires to resign or take a leave of absence, he will present a letter to the elders. The elders are then charged with approving the leave of absence or accepting the resignation as the case may be. At the first appropriate members meeting, the elders will notify the members of the church of the elder's resignation or leave of absence. If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal irregularity, the resignation will not be a substitute for any appropriate biblical discipline.

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

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

While Trinity Church Denver encourages her pastor(s) toward a long-term view of the ministry, in the providence of God, changes in a pastor's call to a particular church arise for both righteous and sinful reasons. In cases involving moral failures requiring disciplinary proceedings, the disciplinary process for the removal of a pastor is the same as for other officers. For cases that do not involve moral failures or disciplinary proceedings (e.g., [Acts 15:33-41](#), [Romans 15:22-33](#), [1 Corinthians 16:5-12](#)), the procedure for terminating the call of a pastor, thereby dismissing him from service at Trinity Church Denver, is as follows: If a pastor desires to terminate his call, he shall duly inform the session of his desire. In the case of an involuntary termination of his call, a pastor may be recommended for dismissal from service at Trinity Church Denver by a four-fifths majority vote of the session (excluding said pastor). In such a case, the pastor may have recourse to the members of the church by calling for a vote to either sustain his call as pastor or not (with an option to abstain). If the members sustain his call by a two-thirds majority vote, the other elders must afterwards either concede to his call or refer the matter to the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches for binding arbitration or mediation in the case of conflict.

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## Church Discipline

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

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

Any communicant member may be disciplined by the church. Christians who attend church regularly, but are non-members, are subject to pastoral admonishment from the church, but not excommunication. If another church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to our church, the elders will decide whether to honor the discipline of the other church after due consultation with the person concerned and after all appropriate information is sought from the disciplining church.

The elders shall establish the specific procedures for all formal discipline on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures should include a clear and timely warning of the individual that he is in the process of formal discipline, two or three visits or communications involving two or three witnesses, and clear records and/or minutes of the entire proceedings kept by the elders.

When the elders determine that a hearing is necessary, they will establish the specific procedures for each trial on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures should include informing the accused in writing of the specific charges, the time, place, and date of the trial, and ample time for the accused to prepare a defense.

The members of the church will be informed of the hearing at the first opportunity. At the hearing, one of the elders will present a solemn charge from the Scriptures on the responsibilities of those present, the evidence against the accused will be presented, and the accused will have time to make a reasonable defense, including the right to question any witnesses.

At a separate meeting of the elders, a vote will be taken on each of the charges. A four-fifths majority is required for a guilty verdict. A final vote of excommunication should be taken. A four-fifths majority is required for excommunication. If the vote fails to get a four-fifths majority, the party should be returned to full fellowship.

The elders will declare their verdict to the congregation on an appointed Lord's day, following an appropriate exhortation. The accused will be given a written copy of the verdict. The elders will establish an official file containing all the records pertaining to the hearing, including all

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pertinent correspondence, transcripts, and minutes. If he requests it, the accused will be given one copy of this file at the expense of the church. Any appeals to presbytery will be conducted in accordance with the Constitution of the CREC.

Excommunication will end when in the opinion, decided by a four-fifths majority, of the elders the one under discipline has repented. A confession of this repentance will be read to the congregation on the Lord's Day, and the elders shall formally announce the end of the discipline and restoration of fellowship.

### **Affiliation**

Trinity Church Denver is a member of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC), in the Knox Presbytery and accepts all constitutional requirements that come with this affiliation.

### **Subordinate Ministries**

The elders may unanimously delegate to an individual or board the executive authority of any subordinate ministry established by the elders. This executive responsibility continues at the pleasure of the elders. In order to dismiss such an individual, or remove someone from such a board, a two-thirds vote of the elders is required. Separation of a subordinate ministry from Trinity Church Denver may be authorized by a unanimous vote of the elders. All formal actions concerning subordinate ministries will be entered in the minutes of the elders' meetings.

Counselors charged to the counseling ministry of Trinity Church Denver function under the oversight of the elders of Trinity Church Denver and are distinct from psychotherapists registered and licensed by the state. The counseling ministry of the church includes, but is not limited to, formal and informal pastoral counseling (conducted by elders and pastors) and formal and informal biblical counseling (conducted by deacons and lay counselors).

### **Indemnification:**

**SECTION 1. INSURANCE.** Trinity Church Denver will purchase and maintain liability insurance on behalf of any and all persons who are or were a director, officer, leader, employee, committee member or volunteer of Trinity (while serving in their capacity as such). Such insurance will be purchased for the purpose of protecting such persons from covered loss resulting in liability asserted against the above individuals in connection with their activities on behalf of Trinity.

**SECTION 2. INDEMNIFICATION REQUESTS.** Should any director, officer, leader, employee, committee member or volunteer of Trinity Church Denver incur any liability as a result of their affiliation with or service to Trinity that is not covered by the Trinity's insurance policy, and should such liability result in any out-of-pocket cost to such individual, then such individual may request indemnification from Trinity. The granting of full or partial indemnification shall be at the discretion of the elder board of Trinity as set forth in Section 3 herein.

**SECTION 3. INDEMNIFICATION DECISIONS.** In relation to any indemnification request that is made pursuant to Section 2 herein, if such request is made by an individual who is not currently serving on the elder board of Trinity Church Denver, then the indemnification decision (whether

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to indemnify the requesting individual, and the dollar amount of such indemnification), will be made by the elders. Such decision of the elders will be final. If the indemnification request is being made by a person who is currently serving on the elder board, then the indemnification decision (whether to indemnify the requesting party, and the dollar amount of such indemnification), will be made by the remaining disinterested members of the elder board. A decision on the indemnification request by a majority of disinterested members of the elders board will be final.

### **Amendments**

The Trinity Church Denver Confession of Faith and Constitution may be amended through a four-fifths majority vote of the elders when there is first presentation of the proposed change at a subsequent members meeting (or electronic delivery alternative), a written copy of the proposed change is made available to the congregation, and the elders seek due consultation with the members of the church.