

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**PREAMBLE**

In the church of God, all things are to be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). This command pertains to the government of the church as much as to the corporate worship of the church. Convinced that Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, will protect and guide her, we seek to obey Scripture through the following standards for the orderly and scriptural government of Trinity Covenant Church. These standards do not supplant Scripture but rather are an expression of biblical church government under God. While biblical, these standards are primarily procedural; the doctrinal position of the church may be found in our Confession of Faith (Article 1).

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures by maintaining and promoting His worship both individually and corporately, by evangelizing sinners, and by edifying His saints. Therefore, we are committed to proclaiming the glorious Gospel of God's grace, to making disciples throughout the world, to defending "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), to faithfully worshiping the triune God, and to celebrating the sacraments of the New Covenant.

Our intention is to submit to all those principles regarding church government that are clearly required by Scripture or required by deductions from Scripture, which can be understood through good and necessary consequence. For the rest, we desire to operate in terms of a sanctified Christian prudence with all things done in good order and biblical decency. At all times, we seek to submit to the Scriptures and to reflect the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ps. 133; Eph. 4:3,13).

Our desire is to acknowledge, preserve, and manifest unity; preserve purity; and advance Christ's kingdom in an orderly and reasonable way, resulting in mutual edification, accountability, and spiritual discipline. To this end, Trinity Covenant Church of Fort St. John is a member of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC) with the constitutional requirements thereby entailed. Membership in this communion is in no way meant to exclude warm, fraternal, and working relations with other faithful Christian bodies. We therefore welcome and encourage formal, non-binding, fraternal relations with likeminded churches, presbyteries and denominations.

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**ARTICLE 1: CONFESSION OF FAITH**

We acknowledge the ultimate authority of the Holy Scriptures in all matters of the Christian faith. We have adopted the following historic creeds and confessions as our Confession of Faith, believing that they contain the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures: the Ecumenical Creeds (the *Apostles' Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, the *Definition of Chalcedon*, and the *Athanasian Creed*) as well as the Three Forms of Unity (the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, and the *Canons of Dort*), the *Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms* (original 1647 version), and the *London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*. We hold to these historic statements of the Reformed faith in honest and overall subscription.

These confessions not only summarize the heart of the Christian faith but also summarize some of our distinctives as a particular body. Still, our confessions do not necessarily define the boundaries of our fellowship.

These confessions do represent the doctrinal understanding of the eldership of Trinity Covenant Church, and it is our intention that the teaching and preaching at Trinity Covenant Church reflect this understanding also.

As a body of reformational evangelicals, we seek to display our unity in truth with other faithful churches, not only in the present, but also with the historic Christian church throughout the ages. Although we have not officially adopted other confessions, we are in general agreement with much contained in the other historic confessions of the Reformation.

From time to time, our church may adopt position papers on current issues. These papers do not carry the same weight as our confessions; they have stood neither the test of time nor the scrutiny of the church universal. However, they do represent the thinking of the eldership on a particular issue.

**ARTICLE 2: MEMBERSHIP**

**Members**

Membership will be comprised of confessing members and communicant members. The elders shall determine whether to receive an applicant for membership as a confessing member or a communicant member.

Confessing members are those of at least the age of 18 who:

- a) have appeared before an elder and have expressed their agreement with this constitution;
- b) have committed themselves to full participation in the life of Trinity Covenant Church.

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**Members (*Continued*)**

Communicant members include the baptized children of confessing or communicant members and those who wish to participate in the life of Trinity Covenant Church but have not formally affirmed their agreement with this constitution.

Communicant children are eligible, and are encouraged, to become confessing members when they reach the age of 18.

Communicant adults must be baptized and shall appear before an elder(s) to give a credible profession of their faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. They will enjoy all the privileges of fellowship, worship, and service under the supervision of the church leadership but shall not vote in congregational meetings and may not serve as an elder or deacon.

Periodically, but at least annually, the session will review the church roll to determine those members who have been regularly absent from worship services to consider appropriate action. No inactive roll will be established. If a confessing member no longer affirms this Constitution, he or she shall inform the elders, who may make him or her a communicant member.

**Voting**

Only confessing members will have the right to vote on all matters presented by the eldership for vote at any congregational meeting. Voting rights shall be as follows:

- a) Where a husband and wife are both confessing members of the church, the husband and wife will have a household vote valued as two votes which will be cast by the household head.
- b) Where either a husband or a wife is a confessing member of the church but the other is not, the one being a confessing member of the church will have a right to vote.
- c) Where a confessing member is not married, he or she will have the right to vote.

A communicant member may express his or her opinions on all matters presented by the eldership at a congregational meeting, but he or she may not vote.

**Transfer of Membership**

If any member requests to be transferred to the care of another Christian church recognized by the elders, the elders in session will transfer him/her with a blessing, except as noted below. If any member requests a transfer after committing a disciplinable offense, the elders in council will delay acting on the request until the disciplinary matter is resolved.

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**ARTICLE 3: ELDERS AND DEACONS**

**Elder Leadership and Elders**

Christ is the Head of the church (Eph. 5:23) and according to His Word, the form of local congregational government is a plurality of qualified men (Titus 1:5; James 5:14) exercising leadership in the local congregation of believers (1 Pet. 5:1; Phil. 1:1). The office designated for ruling and shepherding the church is the office of elder (1 Tim. 5:17; Tit. 1:5-9). Therefore, under Christ, the ordained authority within the local church is the elders in council. The elders in council act corporately to govern the church of God (1 Tim. 5:17). Active and inactive elders will serve as the directors of Trinity Covenant Church of Fort St John.

**Duties of Elders**

The elders are collectively responsible for ruling and shepherding (1 Pet. 5:1-2), equipping (Eph. 4:11-12), prayer and fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3), teaching and preaching (1 Tim. 5:17), leading and ordering worship (1 Tim. 4:13; 1 Cor. 14:40), administering the sacraments which are baptism and communion (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26, 40), administering church discipline and restoration (1 Cor. 5:1-5), and prayer for the healing of the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).

The elders in council are also authorized to delegate responsibilities to the deacons, hire church staff, define responsibilities for church staff, delegate responsibilities to the staff of subordinate ministries (as determined by the elders in council), and pre-approve the annual budget for congregational consideration.

The elders in council may also commission or license ministerial students and oversee the course of their training for eldership. Under the guidance and oversight of the elders in council, such men may perform all the various ministerial functions of elders, participation in the governance of the church excepted. The elders in council may occasionally delegate preaching, teaching and/or worship leading duties to other biblically-qualified men who are willing.

Elder business will be conducted at regularly scheduled meetings or at special meetings called for this purpose. The elders in council will record accurate minutes of the actions taken in their meetings. In all meetings of the elders in council, each elder will have one vote.

Vocational elders (commonly called pastors) will be examined by the elders in council of Trinity Covenant Church of Fort St. John with regard to their manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The terms of their call, including compensation, vacation time, ministerial expenses, etc., will also be determined by the elders in council and reviewed annually.

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**Duties of Deacons**

Under the general oversight of the elders in council, the deacons manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church (Acts 6:2-4). Such responsibilities include preparing and administering the annual budget, building maintenance, fellowship meals, administrative review of subordinate ministries, office support, administering the deacons' fund, and any other duties the elders in council may assign to them.

The business of the deacons will be conducted at regular meetings or with meetings in conjunction with the elders, as the elders in council deem necessary. Accurate minutes of such meetings will be kept and the deacons will give regular reports to the elders, as well as an annual financial report.

**Ordination of Elders and Deacons**

The elders in council will examine any potential candidate for elder or deacon with regard to his doctrine and manner of life. If he has any disagreement or reservation about any portion of the church's doctrinal views as expressed in this Constitution or the Confession of Faith, he must inform the elders of it. All candidates must meet the qualifications set down in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:2-4; 1 Tim. 3:8-13) for the office.

A nomination may be received from any member, elder or deacon at any time if it is delivered to an elder in writing. Nominated, willing individuals who are accepted by the elders in council may undergo some training, instruction, and examination. The elders in council, after considerations during or after the time of training, instruction, and examination, may or may not approve the nominee.

Once the elders in council approve a nominee, confessing members (electors) will vote on whether they believe he fulfills the biblical qualifications for office. If the candidate receives a two-thirds majority support of the congregation, the elders will ordain him for a two year term through the laying on of hands and prayer. If any elector votes "no" and includes a reason for the "no" vote on the ballot along with his/her name (2 Cor. 13:1), the elders must carefully weigh the scriptural merit of the objection before ordaining the elder/deacon elect. Ballots with a "no" vote and comments will be disregarded if they do not contain the name of the elector. The elders in council may, at their discretion, postpone the ordination of an elder/deacon elect if further investigation into the written objection is scripturally warranted.

At the end of a two year term, if he desires to continue serving the congregation, the elder/deacon must be reaffirmed by a two-thirds majority vote of the entire confessing membership. If elected, the elders will extend his ordination for an additional five year term. If any elector votes "no" and includes a reason for the "no" vote on the ballot along with his/her name (2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19), the elders must carefully weigh the scriptural merit of the objection before ordaining or not ordaining the elder/deacon elect, the same as with an initial ordination. Ballots with a "no" vote and comments will be disregarded if they do not contain the name of the elector.

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**Ordination of Elders and Deacons (*Continued*)**

After the subsequent five year term, if the elder/deacon wishes to continue his service, another election by the confessing membership will occur. The term of his service will be determined by the mutual agreement of candidate, council, and confessing membership.

Terms of service, other than those specified above, may be determined as needed by the mutual agreement of candidate, council, and confessing membership.

**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 in council. The elders will notify the church as soon as possible.

If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal irregularity, then the resignation will not be a substitute for any appropriate biblical discipline.

**Removal of Elders and Deacons**

If two or three witnesses believe an elder or deacon to be morally or doctrinally unfit for office, they will present written charges to the elders in council (1 Tim. 5:19). If the elders in council, excluding the accused in such a case, decide that the question merits an investigation and/or hearing, at their discretion they may inform the church of the charges, announce the date(s) of the scheduled investigation and/or hearing, and encourage the heads of households to attend. If the charges are sustained by the other elders, the accused elder or deacon, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to correction, may be rebuked at a church meeting (1 Tim. 5:20), may be removed from the office of elder or deacon (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), or both.

**ARTICLE 4: CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

Any member of Trinity Covenant Church is subject to her discipline.

The ordinary course of discipline is informal. Members are encouraged to practice self-discipline and encourage other members to covenant faithfulness (Matt. 18:15; James 5:19-20).

Formal church discipline is applied through the formal action and judgment of the elders in council when unrepentant sin is identified. Except in cases of scandal requiring immediate action, the pattern of church discipline will generally include formal private admonishment by two or three witnesses (Matt. 18:16) and a formal hearing that may result in excommunication (Matt. 18:17).

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**ARTICLE 4: CHURCH DISCIPLINE (Continued)**

Christians who worship with us but are non-members are subject to pastoral admonishment and correction from the church. Such admonishment may include excluding the person from partaking of Communion. If another church has disciplined one of its members and that person subsequently comes to Trinity Covenant 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 in council will 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 to the individual that he or she is in the process of formal discipline, two or three visits or communications (each involving two or three witnesses), and clear records and/or minutes of the entire proceedings kept by the elders in council.

When the elders in council determine that a trial 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 provision of ample time for the accused to prepare a defense.

The congregation will be informed of the trial at the first opportunity. At the trial, one of the elders or deacons 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 in council, a vote will be taken on each of the charges. 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 in council will establish an official file containing all the records pertaining to the hearing, including all pertinent correspondence, transcripts, and minutes. If he or she so requests, 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 of the elders in council, the one under discipline has repented, including godly sorrow, confession of sin, and a commitment, in the area of the previous offense, to "go and sin no more" (2 Cor. 7:9-10; 1 Jn. 1:9; Jn. 8:11). A statement of this repentance will be read to the congregation on the Lord's Day and the elders will formally announce the end of the discipline and restoration of fellowship.

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**ARTICLE 4: CHURCH DISCIPLINE (Continued)**

If the restored member occupied the office of elder/deacon when the sin occurred or its subsequent disciplinary action was taken, although that member is restored to full fellowship, they will not at that time be restored to their former role in church governance or ministry. Whether restoration to a church office ever occurs will be based on the scriptural reasons for the excommunication in the first place.

**ARTICLE 5: WORSHIP**

**Covenant Renewal Worship**

The Lord's Day worship service is understood in light of the covenantal relationship between God and His people. It is a weekly time of renewing covenant between God and His people; between Christ and His Bride. As such, we recognize worship to be a conversation between God and His people in which God speaks to us and we respond. God speaks to us through His Word in readings, sermon, song and sacrament; we respond in biblically patterned worship, thanksgiving and obedience. Thus, the order of our worship follows the biblical pattern of call, confession, consecration, communion, and commission.

We call whole families to participate in Lord's Day worship together since children, no less than their parents and elders, comprise Christ's church and the kingdom of heaven (Mk. 10:14).

We celebrate Communion weekly as the culmination of covenant renewal, where Christ graciously invites His body to share table fellowship with Him and with one another in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and the love of the Father. We call all baptized members of the covenant to participate.

**Schedule of Worship and Church Meetings**

Worship services will be held as often as the elders determine but the regular schedule of meetings will always include the Lord's Day service. Other ministries such as biblical and theological classes for further ministry training, special conferences and seminars, fellowship activities, outreach ministries, and special church calendar services, will be scheduled according to the needs of the congregation at the discretion of the elders in accordance with God's Word.

Members of this church who willfully and consistently absent themselves from the Lord's Day worship, without plausible reason or excuse, will be subject to church admonition, correction, and/or discipline.

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**Baptism**

Baptism is a blessed sacrament of the New Testament instituted by our Lord as a sign and seal of salvation. The sacramental washing with water in the name of the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) officially admits a person into the church, testifies of his or her identification with the Triune God of Scripture, union with Christ, regeneration, forgiveness of sin, consecration to walk in newness of life, and fellowship in the Body of Christ (Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 2:11-12; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-5; Tit. 3:5; Mark 1:4; Matt. 28:19-20).

**Recipients of Baptism**

The elders of Trinity Covenant Church recognize that perspectives differ among faithful Christians over the biblical teaching on baptism. In light of this, we wish to emphasize the biblical importance, requirement, and covenantal significance of baptism as the sacrament of one's New Covenant union with Christ and with His church. We therefore welcome into our fellowship those who share this conviction, whether from a paedobaptism (i.e., infant-baptism) or a credobaptism (i.e., baptism upon "credible" profession of faith) perspective. We commit to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

While a member or an office-bearer of Trinity Covenant Church may not fully agree with the practice of paedobaptism, each must recognize that baptism has been nearly universally held by the church to be appropriately administered to the children of Christians in infancy, since to them, no less than to adults, are the promises of participation in the covenant, church, and kingdom of our Savior (Mk. 10:14). To covenant children, no less than to adults, do the benefits of Christ and His redemption accomplished apply (Acts 2:39; Matt. 18:2-6; Eph. 6:4). We believe baptism does not automatically in and of itself regenerate or save those who receive it.

All baptismal candidates, infants or professing believers, must be approved by the elders.

**Communion**

Instituted by our Lord as a sign and seal of His redemptive work, Communion is a blessed sacrament of the New Testament. By eating the bread and drinking the cup in a worthy manner, believers spiritually feed upon Christ, renew their union and communion with Him, acknowledge and proclaim His redemptive work on their behalf, renew their thankfulness for His saving work, and spiritually commune with other believers (Luke 22:20; Mat. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; 1 Cor. 10:14-21; Jn. 6:32-58).

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**Recipients of Communion**

Communion is for all of the Lord's people. Hence, we encourage all baptized Christians who are not censured under lawful church discipline, to celebrate the Communion table and feed upon Christ. Communion is integral to the act of confession, repentance, renewal, and abiding in Christ.

Moreover, Communion should be received by all baptized covenant members in good ecclesiastical standing, including baptized children being raised in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Under the headship of Christ, the responsibility for administering the sacraments remains with the elders.

We recognize that among faithful Christians there are differences of perspective over the observance of Communion. The above represents the convictions of the elders of Trinity Covenant Church and, as such, it will govern our observance of the table. However, we commit to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**ARTICLE 6: CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY**

This Constitution, as any other non-inspired document, is not infallible. It does reflect however, an earnest and sincere attempt to apply the Scriptures in ordering the life of this local church. Therefore, the demands of the ninth commandment and the sanctity of truth in general, require that the elders and all of the members of this church abide by our mutual commitment.

The Confession of Faith (Article 1) may be augmented by the inclusion of other Creeds or Confessions and this Constitution may be amended at any time with the consent of at least three-quarters of the elders in council when the following conditions have been first fulfilled:

- a) a written copy of the proposed change has been made available to the membership;
- b) the membership has had one month to discuss the changes with the elders.

**ARTICLE 7: DISSOLUTION**

In the event of the dissolution of Trinity Covenant Church of Fort St. John, all of its debts will be fully satisfied. None of its assets or holdings will be divided among the members or other individuals but prior to dissolution, will be irrevocably designated by the elders in council to such other non-profit organizations, non-profit corporations, ministries, or churches as are in agreement with the letter and spirit of the Confession of Faith (Article 1) adopted by this church, who are also qualified donees described in Subsection 149.1 of the Income Tax Act of Canada.

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**ARTICLE 8: NON-PROFIT CHARACTER**

Trinity Covenant Church shall be carried on without purpose of gain for its members, and any profits or other gains to the organization shall be used in promoting its objectives.

**CERTIFICATION**

**TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH  
FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.**

**Constitution**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Please Print)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position within organization** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date signed** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Please Print)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position within organization** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date signed** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Please Print)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position within organization** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date signed** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Position within organization** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date signed** \_\_\_\_\_