

The Constitution of
The Trinity Baptist Church
of Montville
Montville, New Jersey

Adopted October 1, 1995



FOREWORD

The original Constitution of the church, then known as “The Trinity Church of West Essex,” was adopted in March, 1967. The name of the church was changed to “The Trinity Baptist Church of Essex Fells” in 1971, and a number of amendments to the Constitution were adopted in March, 1978. Since that time the elders have compiled suggested changes, resulting in an even more extensive revision process from 1987 to 1995. A proposed draft was distributed to the membership in April, 1995, and time was given during twelve consecutive Adult Classes to present the proposed changes. At a congregational business meeting held on October 1, 1995, the Constitution of Trinity Baptist Church was unanimously adopted in its present form.

Because we believe that the Bible must dictate the doctrine and life of this church, Scripture references which form the basis of our practice have been considerably expanded. These references include portions which directly address a specific issue, as well as those which contain a more general principle. It is hoped that each reader of this document will study it with the noble spirit of the Bereans, who received the apostle’s teaching but then examined the Scriptures diligently to confirm the truth of that instruction (Acts 17:11).

Although much effort has been given to prepare this Constitution as an effective method for ordering our life together, we recognize that it is still an imperfect and changeable product of men. We therefore prayerfully commit this Constitution, and the church it is intended to govern, into the hands of our omniscient and changeless God, whose Word shall stand forever.

The Elders of Trinity Baptist Church

Amended January 2015

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Constitution

The Trinity Baptist Church of Montville

Preamble

We, the members of The Trinity Baptist Church of Montville, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

Article I NAME

The official name of this church as specified in the Certificate of Amendment to the Certificate of Incorporation is The Trinity Baptist Church of Montville.

Article II PURPOSE

Section 1. The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures (*Eph. 3:21*) in promoting His worship (*Ex. 20:3-11; Jn. 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:5*), evangelizing sinners (*Acts 13 and 14; 1 Cor. 14:24-25; 1 Tim. 2:1-4 with 3:15*), edifying saints (*1 Cor. 14:12, 18-19, 26; 1 Cor. 12:27-28; Eph. 4:11-16*), planting and strengthening churches (*Acts 11:29-30; 15:3,36,41; 16:5*), and showing benevolence to the needy (*Rom. 15:26-27; Gal. 2:10; 6:10*). We are committed to the proclamation of God's perfect Law and the glorious Gospel of His grace through all the world (*Lk. 24:47; Acts 20:20-21,27; Rom. 1:15-8:39*) and to the defense of "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (*Jude 3*).

Section 2. The primary means for the accomplishment of this purpose are prayer and the public and private ministry of the Word of God (*Acts 6:4; 20:20; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 1 Tim. 2:1-8 with 3:14-16 and 4:6,13-15; 2 Tim. 4:1-2*). We may also for the accomplishment of this purpose use other means and engage in other ministries which in the judgment of the elders are biblically justified, as, for example (but not limited to these), the sale of books and tapes, the production of radio broadcasts, and the training of men for the ministry; which additional ministries we may, conversely, discontinue at any time.

Article III

ARTICLES OF FAITH

We adopt as the fullest expression of our faith the London Confession of Faith of 1689. The ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice is the Bible alone, which truth is clearly set forth in the opening article of the Confession itself. This historic document, albeit imperfect, is an excellent summary of the things most surely believed among us, and we find it to be an assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness.

Article IV

CHURCH AFFILIATION

Section 1. We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church (*Eph. 5:23*) and who directs the affairs of the church through elders chosen and ordained according to the precepts of Holy Scripture (*Acts 14:21-23; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9*). The elders themselves at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Holy Scripture (*Acts 16:4; 1 Cor. 7:17*).

Section 2. The church should cooperate with other like-minded churches in matters of mutual interest and concern (*2 Cor. 8:18-24*). We may seek the assistance (*1 Cor. 16:1-2*) and should seek the counsel (*Prov. 11:14; 1 Thes. 2:14*) of other churches in matters of special importance and concern to us, but the decision of no other church, group of churches, or council shall ever be binding on this church (*Acts 14:21-23; Phil. 4:15; London Confession 26:15*).

Section 3. In addition to respecting the principles articulated in our Confession of Faith (*26:15*), the church shall seek the assistance of an Advisory Council in cases of critical concern which threaten the integrity, unity, or biblical order of this congregation (*Acts 15:2*).

The Advisory Council shall consist of five elders chosen by our elders from at least three sister churches with whom we have close fellowship. The choice of these five men shall be reviewed each year prior to the annual business meeting. The consent of those to be proposed shall be obtained and the names of the five men shall be announced at the annual meeting and approved by the suffrage of the church.

Should there be an untimely and unresolved disruption of fellowship with any of the churches from which the men have been selected, or should any of these men be removed from office or become unable to serve on the Advisory Council, the elders shall have the liberty of proposing replacements. Those shall be approved by the vote of the church at a

properly called congregational meeting.

The Advisory Council shall be convened or consulted at the discretion of a majority of the elders or, should the church be without elders, at the discretion of a majority of the deacons.

Article V CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Requirements for Membership. Any man or woman (*Acts 5:14; 8:3,12*) shall be eligible for membership in this church who professes repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (*Acts 2:37-42; 5:14; 8:12; 16:30-34; 20:21*), who manifests a life transformed by the power of Christ (*1 Cor. 1:1-2 with 6:11; Gal. 1:1-2 with 4:8-9; 1 Thes. 1:1-9*), who has been baptized upon profession of faith (*Mt. 28:18-20; Jn. 4:1-2; Acts 2:41; 8:12; 16:31-34; 18:8*), who expresses agreement with the Confession and Constitution of this church (*1 Cor. 1:10; 14:40; Eph. 4:3*), who intends to give wholehearted support to its ministry (*1 Cor. 14:40; 2 Cor. 8:5; 1 Thes. 5:12-14; Acts 15:39*), and who is willing to submit to its government (*1 Cor. 14:40; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:10; Heb. 13:17*) and discipline (*Mt. 18:15-18; Acts 5:13-14*).

Section 2. Types of Membership. Each member of the church is acknowledged to form a vital part of the body and to have a special function in the life of the body (*1 Cor. 12:14-27*). Practical considerations, however, require that certain distinctions be recognized in the membership of this church.

Paragraph A. Regular Members. All who are received into the membership of the church according to the procedures set forth in Section 3 of this Article, whose membership has not been terminated in any of the ways specified in Section 5 of this Article, and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church as set forth in Article VI, shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the church (*Acts 2:37-47*).

Paragraph B. Temporary Members. Persons who come to live in our area for a limited period of time (e.g., students, military personnel, persons on special work assignments) may be received into or removed from the membership of the church on the same basis and in the same manner as persons who have permanent residence in our geographical area. If such a person is already a member of a church in his place of permanent residence, he need not be released from the membership of his home church but will be regarded as a temporary member while in our midst, enjoying all the rights and privileges and subject to all the duties and discipline of regular membership.

Students of Trinity Ministerial Academy and their wives will automatically become temporary members. When a temporary member leaves our area, he will be released to the oversight of his home church and no longer be regarded as a member of this church (*Acts 18:27; Rom. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:1; Col. 4:10; 3 Jn. 5-10*).

Paragraph C. Associate Members. Regular members who move away from our area and who cannot find another local church with which they can conscientiously unite will, at their request, be retained as associate members of this church. Such persons must maintain regular communication with the church in order to maintain their associate membership. However, they are urged diligently to seek a church with which they can unite elsewhere, since associate membership is an abnormality which ought to be rectified as soon as possible. An associate member shall not be allowed to vote in any business meeting of the church. At the discretion of the elders, associate membership may also be granted to invalids, Christian workers, and others whose relation to the church involves unusual circumstances (*Acts 8:27-40*).

Section 3. Procedures for the Reception of New Members.

Paragraph A. Pastoral Examination. A person who desires to become a member of the church shall apply to the elders by submitting a completed membership application form. The elders will interview the individual and seek to determine whether that person has a credible profession of faith in Christ, has been scripturally baptized, is in agreement with the Confession and Constitution of the church, is capable of assuming the responsibilities and liabilities of church membership, intends to give wholehearted support to its ministry, and is willing to submit to its government and discipline (*Acts 9:26-27; 10:47-48 with 11:2-18; 11:23*).

Paragraph B. Pastoral Investigation. If the applicant is or has been a member of another church, efforts will be made to determine the person's standing in that church and his reasons for leaving (*Acts 15:1-2 with 24-25*). If a former church raises an objection which the elders consider valid (*3 Jn. 8-10*), the applicant may be denied membership at the discretion of the elders.

Paragraph C. Congregational Advice. If the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the requirements for membership, they shall announce the same to the congregation at a stated meeting of the church. At least two weeks will be allowed for objections or questions to be raised privately with the elders concerning the applicant's manner of life or doctrine. If no objection is raised the person will be publicly received into the membership at a stated meeting of the church, usually the next meeting for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The elders shall postpone the reception of

a person into membership until any objections are investigated and resolved to their satisfaction (*Acts 9:26-29*).

Paragraph D. Congregational Consent. In the stated meeting of the church at which a person is to be received into membership, he shall be asked verbally to affirm his commitment to Christ and to the Confession and Constitution of this church (1 Tim. 6:12), and the members of the congregation shall be asked to express their consent to his reception (*Acts 9:26-28; Rom. 15:7*).

Section 4. Conduct Required of Members.

Paragraph A. Godly Churchmanship.

(1) Attendance at Stated Meetings. Regular and temporary members are required to attend all the stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered (by illness, accident, unusual working conditions, and other such circumstances). The stated meetings of the church are all the services on the Lord's Day (the Bible school, morning and evening worship, and the Lord's Supper), the midweek prayer service, the business meetings of the congregation, and any special meetings to which the elders shall occasionally summon the church (*Joel 2:15-16; Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:24-25*).

(2) Commitment to Our Corporate Standards. It is the responsibility of every member to contribute to the maintenance of the doctrinal purity and unity of the congregation (*Eph. 4:1-6, 13-15*). In pursuit of these goals, all regular and temporary members are strongly urged to read the Confession and Constitution of the church at least once a year in order to maintain sensitivity to our commonly held standards of doctrine and practice (*Amos 3:3; 1 Cor. 1:10; Col. 2:5*). On their part, the elders shall conscientiously make the proclamation of those biblical doctrines central to and contained in our Confession of Faith a vital part of the regular public ministries of the Word (*Acts 20:27*). Similarly, they shall regularly expound the major biblical principles embodied in this Constitution. To this end, the elders shall annually review the content of the public ministry and include a summary thereof in the annual elders' report. Any member who becomes concerned that the doctrinal integrity of the church, as summarized in our Confession of Faith, or the biblical order of the church, as set forth in the Confession and this Constitution, is not being maintained in the church's public teaching ministry or in its corporate life, is urged to faithfully and graciously make his concerns known to the elders (*Gal. 2:11; 1 Sam. 12:3; Prov. 25:15*).

(3) Financial Support. Since it is clearly taught in Scripture that Christians should support financially the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate giving made through the local church (*Mal. 3:8-10*;

1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8 and 9), all the members of this church are expected to conform to this rule of Scripture. The tithe (ten percent of one's income) is strongly urged upon each member as an expression of worship and as the biblical norm for basic giving, to which should be added gifts and offerings according to one's ability and the willingness of his heart (*Gen. 14:18-20; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; Ex. 36:2-7*).

(4) Promotion of Edification and Peace. Since the church is represented in Scripture as a body having many members, each of the members having its particular function and yet having a concern for the health and protection of the whole (*1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:4,11-16*), this church expects that each of its members will strive for the good of the entire body. The members must actively seek to cultivate acquaintance with one another and maintain mutual transparency and honesty so that they may be better able to pray for one another (*Eph. 6:18*); love, comfort, and encourage one another (*1 Jn. 4:20-21; 1 Thes. 4:18*); and help one another materially as necessity may require (*Eph. 4:25; Gal. 6:10; 1 Jn. 3:16-18*). In addition, members must discreetly confess their sins to one another (*Jas. 5:16*), faithfully admonish and exhort one another (*Mt. 18:15-16; 1 Thes. 5:14; Heb. 3:12-13; 10:24-25*), refrain from all backbiting and gossip (*Ps. 15:3; Prov. 16:28; 26:20-22*), and keep in strict confidence all matters which the elders determine are private concerns of the church (*Prov. 11:13*).

(5) Support of and Submission to the Leadership. All who come into the membership of this church are expected to support and submit to the overseers of the church. Supporting God's servants involves praying for them and their labors (*Rom. 15:30-32; Eph. 6:18-19*); cultivating personal acquaintance with them, loving them, and esteeming them highly for their work's sake (*1 Thes. 5:12-13*); standing by them in their afflictions and in all their good causes (*2 Tim. 1:15-18*); assisting them (*Rom. 15:23-24; Phil. 4:15-16*); and defending rather than prejudicing or damaging their good name (*Acts 23:5; 1 Tim. 5:19*).

Submitting to God's servants includes imitating their faith, Christian graces, and godly practices as they also imitate Christ (*1 Cor. 11:1; Heb. 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:3*); receiving their teaching with all readiness of mind and teachableness of spirit, yet with ultimate allegiance to the Word of God (*Acts 17:11; Jas. 1:19-21; 1 Thes. 2:13*); humbly heeding their scriptural rebukes and warnings as those appointed to watch for the members' souls and committed to labor to present them complete and mature in Christ (*Heb. 13:17; Col. 1:28*); seeking and carefully considering their counsel as those counted faithful by the Lord (*1 Cor. 7:25*); and cheerfully embracing and

abiding by their decisions regarding corporate policy in God's house, which is His church (*1 Tim. 3:5,15; Heb. 13:17*), without gainsaying and murmuring even when differing with their judgment (*Rom. 10:21; 1 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14; Jude 11*).

Paragraph B. A Godly Christian Life. All who come into the membership of this church are expected to walk worthily of the Lord, that His Name and Word not be blasphemed but rather His excellencies be displayed through us (*Col. 1:10; 1 Pet. 2:9*), and that the good name of the church not be damaged but rather enhanced (*Acts 2:47; 2 Cor. 8:18-21*). Therefore every member is expected to practice and cultivate godliness in all areas of life, including the following:

(1) Personal Devotion to God. Each member is expected to walk personally with the Lord (*Gen. 5:24; 6:9*), making regular use of the private means of grace, such as daily secret prayer (*Mt. 6:6,10; Ps. 55:17; 88:9; Dan. 6:10*); daily reading and meditating on God's Word (*Ps. 1:2; 119:11, 97*); continual maintenance of a good conscience with Judgment Day honesty (*Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:19; Heb. 10:22; 13:18*); periodic and wholesome self-examination, prayerfully conducted by the standard of God's Word (*Ps. 139:23-24; 2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Pet. 1:10-11; 1 Jn. 5:13*); and careful and spiritual observance of the Lord's Day Sabbath (*Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Is. 58:13-14; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10*).

(2) Family Life. The church expects its members to obey the teachings of the Scriptures with respect to family life and the government of the home. As the God-appointed head of the family, the husband must rule his household with gentleness and love but also with wisdom and firmness (*Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Tim. 3:4-5*). The wife must be in subjection to her husband in all things according to the rule of Scripture (*Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pet. 3:1*). The husband with the wife must nurture the children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (*Eph. 6:1-4*) by setting a godly example before them; by leading them in family worship; by instructing them consistently in the Scriptures (*Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:7,9*); by praying for them (*1 Chron. 29:18-19*); and by wise, loving and firm discipline, including the biblical use of the rod when it is needed (*Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; Heb. 12:7*).

(3) Personal Evangelism. It is the duty of every member to pray and labor according to his God-given ability and opportunity (*Rom. 12:6*) for the extension of the Kingdom of God both at home and to the ends of the earth (*Acts 1:8*). Therefore, every member should seek to recognize and seize every opportunity to bear witness to Christ by consistent Christian conduct and by verbal testimony (*Mt. 10:32-33; Rom. 1:16-17; 9:1-3; 10:1; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Pet. 3:14-16*).

(4) Christian Liberty. Each member is required to render in his daily life loyal obedience to all the moral precepts established in the Word of God (*Rom. 8:3-4*). If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His Word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The exercise of Christian liberty, however, must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and to glorify Him in all things (*1 Pet. 1:17; 1 Cor. 10:31*), a loving regard for the consciences of weaker brethren (*1 Cor. 8:9-13; Rom. 15:1-3*), a compassion for the lost (*1 Cor. 9:19-22*), and a zealous regard for the health of one's own soul (*Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 9:23-10:13; 1 Pet. 2:16*).

(5) Separation from the World. God never intended the glorious blessing of Christian liberty which His people enjoy to become an excuse and covering for worldliness (*Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:16*). On the contrary, Christians have been liberated from bondage to their former sins in order that they might be a people distinct from this wicked world and set apart unto God (*Lev. 18:1-30; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Pet. 1:14-15*). Accordingly, Christ's disciples are commanded not to love the world (*Ps. 139:19-22; Jas. 4:4; 1 Jn. 2:15*), but rather to refrain from their former wicked attitudes and deeds (*Eph. 4:17-22; 5:7-12; Titus 2:12; 3:3; 1 Pet. 4:3-4*) and to resist the wicked influences of a godless society (*Prov. 1:10-19; Jas. 1:27*).

Therefore, all the members of this church are expected to separate from the attitudes, practices and unwholesome influences of the world however they are exerted upon them and their families (*Rom. 12:1-2*). Specifically, members are expected to resist the worldly materialism which regards the things of this life to be of primary importance (*Mk. 8:36; Lk. 12:15; 1 Jn. 2:15-17*). Members are expected not to indulge in any of the world's vices, such as drunkenness, drug abuse, gluttony, fornication, homosexuality, viewing, reading or listening to pornography, and all other forms of uncleanness and shameful deeds (*1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-12*). Members are also expected to refrain from all entangling relationships with the ungodly, such as intimate, frequent companionship with them (*1 Cor. 15:33; Jas. 4:4*); pursuing romantic interests in them (*Judges 16:4-5; 1 Kings 11:1-4,9; Prov. 2:16-17*); and contracting marriages with them (*2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 7:39*).

Section 5. Termination of Membership.

Paragraph A. Ways of Termination.

(1) By Death. When a member of the church dies, his name shall be removed from the membership roll (*Heb. 12:23*).

(2) By Transfer. When it is so requested, the elders may grant to a member in good standing a letter of commendation to another church (*Acts 18:27*). No such letter may be given to a member who is under corrective discipline. The elders may refuse to send a letter of commendation to any

church which is in their judgment disloyal to “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (*Jude 3*) or which does not exercise godly care over its members (*Heb. 13:17*).

(3) By Resignation. Membership in Trinity Baptist Church is entered and initiated jointly, by voluntary commitment from the individual applicant and acceptance by the church, expressed in terms of the procedures described in Section 3 of this Article. Accordingly, members cannot terminate their membership unilaterally under all circumstances. As a general rule, a member may voluntarily resign from membership in Trinity Baptist Church. In such cases the member should first consult with the elders. However, a resignation offered by a person guilty of sin which warrants corrective discipline will be regarded as invalid, and the church may proceed with public censure, suspension of privileges, or excommunication in accordance with the procedures outlined in Article VI (*Acts 15:24; 1 Jn. 2:18-19 with 2 Jn. 7-11*).

(4) By Exclusion. If a member ceases to attend the stated meetings of the church without showing just cause, or if upon relocation ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he may be excluded from the membership. In such cases the elders shall try to contact the person and resolve the situation (*Ezek. 34:4*). If these efforts are unavailing, the elders shall recommend to the congregation that the person be excluded. If a member not guilty of sin which warrants corrective discipline either renounces his commitment to keep any of the requirements of membership listed in Section 1 or Section 4 of this Article (*Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21-23; Ps. 15:4; 24:4; Mt. 5:37*), or ceases without just cause to practice any of them as a pattern of life (*Ps. 65:1; Eccl. 5:1-5; Mt. 21:28-31; 23:3*), and yet refuses to resign voluntarily, he may be excluded, but only after due admonition from the elders (*2 Tim. 2:24-26*). In such cases the elders shall announce to the congregation at a stated meeting of the church their recommendation to exclude the person and the grounds for such action. Opportunity will be given for questions, and if no objection is raised which the elders consider to be valid, the members of the congregation shall be asked to express their consent to the exclusion. The elders will inform the person, when feasible, that he is no longer a member.

(5) By Excommunication. According to the teaching of Holy Scripture, a congregation must cut off from its fellowship and membership any person who teaches or insists on holding heretical doctrine, who impenitently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity, peace, or purity of the church (*Mt. 18:15ff; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Cor. 5:1ff; Titus 3:10-11*). The procedure to be followed in such excommunication is set forth in Section 2 of Article VI of this Constitution.

Paragraph B. Implications of Termination.

(1) Trinity Baptist Church does not exist in isolation from, but is part of the universal church of Christ, composed of all true churches (*Gal. 1:13, 22; Eph. 3:21*). Accordingly, open and forthright communication among the churches is vital for the purity, peace, edification, and unity of the church universal. Therefore the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to the members of Trinity Baptist Church and to other churches the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated (*Acts 15:24; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17; 4:10*).

(2) In addition, Trinity Baptist Church does not exist in isolation from society at large. Accordingly, Trinity Baptist Church has a moral obligation both to act with integrity and to maintain its testimony before the civil authorities and society in general (*2 Cor. 8:20-21*). Therefore, the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to persons outside the ecclesiastical circles mentioned above the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated (*Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 4:15*).

(3) Termination of membership does not give license to former members to sow discord, to spread false teachings or slander, or to engage in any other behavior which threatens the peace and unity of this church or the church universal. Accordingly, when it is established that a former member is behaving divisively, the elders may issue whatever warnings they deem appropriate to preserve the peace and harmony of this congregation and the church universal (*Acts 15:24; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17; 4:14-15*).

Article VI CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Section 1. General Statement. All the teaching and instruction which takes place in Christ's church is part of its discipline, or training (*Matt. 28:20*). This discipline includes both "formative" measures such as preaching, exhortation, imitation, etc. (*2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 3:13; Titus 2:7*) and "corrective" measures such as public admonition, suspension of privileges, and excommunication (*Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13*). The goals of all church discipline include God's glory in the church, the welfare and purity of the church, the integrity and effectiveness of the church's witness, the sanctification and salvation of God's people, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender (*1 Cor. 5:1-7; 2 Cor. 2:5-8; 1 Tim. 1:20*).

There are occasions when formative discipline alone is insufficient, and corrective discipline becomes necessary (e.g. in cases of heretical doctrine,

scandalous conduct, or serious unresolved personal offenses). All the forms of corrective discipline are ultimately corporate and public acts. As a general rule and whenever feasible, the elders will make an effort to bring the offending party to repentance through private means (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20) before more public steps are taken. Nevertheless, the character of the sin or the circumstances of the sin may necessitate public corrective discipline whether or not any private means have been implemented by the elders. In each case of corrective discipline, the principles and procedures in passages such as Matt. 18:15-17; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thes. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 5:19-20 and Titus 3:10 must be applied judiciously. The paragraphs that follow set forth the various forms of church discipline identified in the Bible, but do not constitute a fixed procedural order.

Section 2. *Various Forms of Corrective Discipline*

Paragraph A. *The Corrective Discipline of Public Admonition.*

When a church member sins in such a way that the offense may not be righteously overlooked (Prov. 19:11; 1 Pet. 4:8), he may be admonished by the elders and called to repentance before the gathered church. For those who remain impenitent, further corrective discipline may be enacted (Matt. 18:15-17; Luke 17:3; 1 Cor. 5:4-5; Titus 3:10-11). Those who humbly receive the word of public admonition, own and confess their sin, and manifest appropriate fruits of repentance (Prov. 28:13) shall afterward be publicly commended for their godly repentance (2 Cor. 7:7-11).

Paragraph B. *The Corrective Discipline of Suspension of Privileges.*

Some sin by a member requires the suspension of some or all of the privileges of church membership in keeping with the nature and gravity of the offense (2 Thes. 3:14-15). This suspension must be enforced by the members of the church. Nevertheless, the elders of the church may, at their discretion, suspend the privileges of a member in anticipation of the public disclosure of the sin (1 Cor. 11:27; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). As soon as possible, the elders shall make the sin of the member known to the congregation. Suspension shall be imposed by the congregation following the procedure outlined in Section 3 of this Article. In all cases of suspension, the offending person is still to be regarded as a brother in Christ and as a member of the church (2 Thes. 3:14-15). If the suspended member persists in his impenitence, additional disciplinary action may be required.

When a suspended member gives satisfactory evidence of his true repentance, the congregation shall restore his membership privileges according to the procedure outlined in Section 3 of this Article.

Paragraph C. *The Corrective Discipline of Excommunication.*

1.) *General statement.* The final and most serious form of corrective discipline that can be enacted by the church is excommunication, that is, the removal of a sinning member from the membership of the church (Matt. 18:15-20; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11). Under ordinary circumstances, before a member is excommunicated, due time is to be allowed for his repentance following the discipline of public admonition and/or suspension of church privileges. If the sinner does not repent, he is to be excommunicated (Matt. 18:15-17; Luke 17:3). In some cases, however, a member's sin may be so heinous, blatant, scandalous, or dangerous that it warrants the immediate action of excommunication by the church without any prior formal disciplinary action (1Cor. 5:1-5). Excommunication shall be enacted by the church (1 Cor. 5:4-5) following the procedure outlined in Section 3 of this Article.

2.) *Treatment of the excommunicated individual.* An excommunicated individual is to be treated as an unbeliever in that he has lost all privileges of church membership (Matt. 18:17). He is treated more severely than any other unbeliever in that, being under punishment, he is denied certain privileges of social interaction (2 Cor. 2:6; 1 Cor. 5:9, 11). He is treated better than any other unbeliever, however, in that he has a greater claim upon the admonitions, prayers, and affections of the brethren. The goal of these continued prayers and admonitions, together with the withdrawal of distinctively Christian fellowship (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:13), is to effect biblical repentance through a sense of sorrow and shame (2 Cor. 2:7).

When an excommunicated person gives satisfactory evidence of his true repentance, the congregation shall restore him according to the procedure outlined in Section 3 of this Article.

Paragraph D. *Qualification:* The church has no right to confiscate goods, forbid conjugal rights, or inflict corporal punishment of any kind upon a member who receives any form of corrective discipline.

Section 3. *Implementation of Corrective Discipline and Restoration*

Paragraph A. *Procedure for the suspension or excommunication of a member.*

At a duly called congregational meeting, the elders shall recommend to the members that the sinning member be disciplined. The elders will clearly identify the type of disciplinary action being recommended (suspension of privileges or excommunication), and delineate the strictures associated with that discipline. In order to enable the members to act with biblical conviction and a good conscience, the elders will state their reasons

for the discipline and provide supporting evidence that warrants the discipline. The congregation shall vote according to the procedure set out in Paragraph C below.

Paragraph B. Procedure for the restoration of a suspended member or excommunicated person.

The goal of all corrective discipline is the restoration of a disciplined person to full regular membership. Since corrective discipline is a corporate act, restoration is also a corporate activity. When the elders deem that a suspended member or excommunicated person is manifesting satisfactory evidence of true repentance (2 Cor. 2:6-8; 7:9-11), they shall recommend to the church that the person be restored. In order to enable the members to act with biblical conviction and a good conscience, the elders shall provide reasons for the restoration of the disciplined person and the evidence of his repentance. In some cases, the person's privileges may be restored or the strictures against him lifted in stages. Congregational votes to remove discipline, restore privileges or remove strictures shall follow the procedure outlined in Paragraph C below.

Paragraph C. *Congregational suffrage (voting).* To be valid, an act of suspension or excommunication must have the approval of at least three-fourths (3/4) of the members of the church present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting (1 Cor. 5:4-5). Likewise, in order to restore the privileges, remove the strictures or to restore a suspended or excommunicated individual to full regular membership in the church the approval of at least three-fourths (3/4) of the members of the church present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting must be obtained (1 Cor. 5:4-5).

Paragraph D. *Reporting matters to civil authorities.* When a member is guilty or suspected of a crime, he may be reported to the civil authorities (Acts 5:29 with 1 Pet. 2:13-14; Acts 25:11; 1 Pet. 4:15).

Section 4. *Protective Discipline.*

While the church has no authority to exercise discipline over non-members, it does have the right and responsibility to protect its members from those who would disrupt its peace and the purity of its life and doctrine (Titus 1:9-11). If and when such persons should trouble the church, the elders may name them, identify their errors, and warn the members not to associate with them (Rom. 16:17).

Article VII CHURCH ORDINANCES

Section 1. *General Statement.* There are two ordinances of special significance which our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of them has saving merit, nor is receiving them absolutely necessary for salvation, nor is any grace automatically imparted to the recipient through the water of baptism or the bread and the cup of the Supper (*Acts 8:13, 18-24; 1 Cor. 11:20, 27-30; Lk. 23:32-43*).

Nevertheless they are means of grace and powerful aids to the faith of believers who properly participate in them. Accordingly our Lord is concerned that they be observed unto edification, in a decent and orderly manner. Therefore, our policy regarding their observance is specified in the following sections.

Section 2. *Baptism.* Only confessed adult disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for baptism, and all such persons should be baptized (*Acts 2:38*). Believing that baptism is the God-ordained door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God, we shall receive into the regular membership of the church only those who have been baptized in the biblical mode, which is by immersion (*Acts 8:38-39; Col. 2:12*) and "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*Mt. 28:19*).

Section 3. *The Lord's Supper.* Whereas baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which one enters the visible church and should be observed only once by each believer, the Lord's Supper should be observed frequently by the assembled church (*Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:26*). Therefore, in virtue of the unity of all the true churches of Christ, which collectively are His body (*1 Cor. 10:16-17; 12:27-28; Col. 1:18*), and in virtue of our Lord's will that only those who are under the government of His church should be admitted to the privileges of His church (*Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor. 10:16; London Confession 26:12*), we welcome to partake of the Lord's Supper with us all those believers, and only those believers, who are members in good standing of churches holding to the essential doctrines and disciplines of historic Protestantism. This is a most holy ordinance and should be observed with solemn joy (*Ps. 2:11-12*) and dignity, even though the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain only symbols of the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper shall be held by the church, under normal circumstances, on the first Lord's Day of each month.

Article VIII CHURCH OFFICERS

Section 1. Foundational Principles. Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the church (*Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18*), and He governs His church through officers whom He appoints (*Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11*) and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work (*1 Tim. 3:1-13*). Because Christ appoints church officers, they have authority (*2 Cor. 13:10*) and their authority is limited by Him in the Scriptures (*1 Cor. 14:36-38; 2 Tim. 3:16-17*) There are two kinds of church officers, elders and deacons (*Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13*). Elders are called “bishops” (meaning “overseers”) because they are charged with the oversight of the assembly (*Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2*), “pastors” because they shepherd the flock of God (*Acts 20:28*), and “rulers” because they govern and care for the house of God (*1 Tim. 3:5; Heb. 13:17,24*).

It is the duty of the church to seek to discover among its members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the graces and gifts necessary for office (*Acts 6:3*), and after formally recognizing them by common suffrage (*Acts 6:5-6*), to set them apart by united prayer (*Acts 6:6*), and then to submit to their authority (*Lk. 10:16; Jn. 13:20; Heb. 13:17*). Church officers are not exempt from church discipline, but on the contrary, their office obliges them to adhere to a more rigorous standard of conduct than other members (*Jas. 3:1*).

Section 2. Elders.

Paragraph A. Authority of Elders.

(1) Ground of Their Authority. The Head of the church (*Col. 1:18*) has given the Scriptures to His church as an infallible and unchanging rule of practice (*2 Tim. 3:16-17; Mt. 28:20; 2 Thes. 2:15; 1 Tim. 3:14-15; 4:11*), to which the elders are always bound in discharging the duties of their office (*1 Cor. 14:36-38*). Insofar as the instruction of the elders is in accord with the Scriptures, that instruction carries with it the authority of Christ Himself (*Lk. 10:16*). Where the Scriptures give explicit or implicit direction to the church on any issue, this direction is always to be obeyed (*Jn. 14:21*). Where no regulative word from Christ is given, elders must exercise their authority in subjection to the general principles of Scripture and to the light of nature and Christian prudence (*1 Cor. 11:13-14; 14:40; London Confession 1:6b*).

(2) Sphere and Limits of Their Authority. The Word of God defines the sphere and limits of the authority of elders. The eldership, as a body, is authorized and responsible to give comprehensive oversight to the church (*Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3*), including the preaching and teaching of the whole

counsel of God (*Acts 20:20-21,27; Titus 1:9*), the watching out for the welfare of the soul of every member of the church (*Eph. 4:11-13; Col. 1:28; 1 Thes. 2:11; Heb. 13:17*), and the directing of the church in all its tasks (*1 Tim. 3:4-5*). Nonetheless, the elders must exercise this authority with sensitivity to the congregation (*Ezek. 34:4; Acts 6:5*) and in the posture of servants and examples to them (*Mt. 20:25-28; 1 Pet. 5:3*). Therefore, the elders should seek the support of the congregation respecting any major endeavor. They should also carefully consider congregational input when to do so would serve the interests of the church and would not involve the elders in a sinful relinquishment of their God-given responsibilities or authority (*1 Tim. 3:5; Acts 19:30; 21:11-14*).

According to Scripture the elders may not impose officers on the church without congregational suffrage, nor may they excommunicate any member without action by the entire church (*Acts 6:3-6; Mt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4-5; 2 Thes. 3:14*). Furthermore, congregational approval is required for any change to this Constitution and for receiving, suspending, or excluding members of the church.

Paragraph B. *Plurality of Elders.* The Scriptures teach that normally there should be a plurality of elders in each local church (*Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5*). Therefore the church should endeavor to discover and then formally to recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite graces and gifts, but only such men (*1 Tim. 5:22*). In addition, the men of the congregation should seek to cultivate the graces and gifts required for the eldership, since godly desire for this office is highly commended (*1 Tim. 3:1*).

If in the providence of God Trinity Baptist Church were to have only one elder, the church should pray fervently that God would raise up others (*Mt. 9:37-38*). The sole elder, with the consent of the congregation, is urged to seek spiritual oversight for himself and his family from the eldership of a sister church with which we have intimate fellowship. He should seek counsel from these spiritual overseers and from the church's approved Advisory Council (see Article IV) in matters of importance in the life of the church. However, his use of such counsel deprives him of none of the authority, and relieves him of none of the responsibility, of his office as elder in this church.

Paragraph C. *Parity and Diversity of Elders.* The elders are all equal in office and authority (*Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17*), but diverse in gift and function. Each elder must be "apt to teach" (*1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9*) and must be engaged in private instruction and admonition and in the administration and government of the church (*Acts 20:28; 1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17*). However, some elders will be more gifted by God, more experienced, more involved, and more proficient than others in executing various dimensions

of the pastoral office (*Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-7*). For example, some should be more engaged in public preaching and teaching than others (*1 Tim. 5:17*). In view of this diversity of gift as well as the numerous and grave responsibilities of the office, it is highly desirable that at least one elder should devote himself full-time to the work of preaching and teaching and the oversight of the church as his calling in life (*1 Cor. 9:14*). The church is responsible to give adequate financial compensation, according to its ability and according to the evidence of a man's gift, especially, but not exclusively, to those elders who labor in the Word (*Prov. 3:27; 1 Tim. 5:17-18*).

Paragraph D. *Number of Elders and Length of Term.* Since the church should endeavor to recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite graces, gifts, and sanctified desire, the number of elders shall not be fixed. These may all continue in office as long as they remain qualified, able, and willing to serve (*1 Pet. 5:2*), and as long as they hold the confidence of the congregation.

Paragraph E. *Qualifications of Elders.* The general qualifications for an elder are clearly set forth in Scripture, particularly in *1 Tim. 3:1-7* and *Titus 1:5-9*. Any man called to this office must be able conscientiously to affirm his agreement with our Confession of Faith and his submission to the Constitution of the church. Should he at any time change his convictions respecting these standards, he is under moral obligation to make this fact known to the church (*Ps. 34:13; Eph. 4:25; Mt. 5:37*).

Paragraph F. *Chairmanship of the Elders.* To help the eldership function in an efficient and orderly manner, the elders shall choose from their number a chairman and a vice-chairman (*1 Cor. 14:40; London Confession 1:6b*). The chairman shall be responsible to organize and lead the regular elders' meetings and, ordinarily, all congregational business meetings. In his absence these functions will be performed by the vice-chairman. Under ordinary circumstances, the chairman shall be a man who has been set apart to labor full-time in the work of the ministry.

Section 3. *Deacons.*

Paragraph A. *General Statement.* Christ, the Head of the church, has instituted the office of deacon as an aid to the people of God in general and to the elders of the church in particular (*Acts 6:1-6*). While the office of deacon is a serving rather than a ruling office, God has promised a special blessing to those who serve well as deacons (*1 Tim. 3:13*). Deacons are responsible to administer the ordinary business, secular affairs, and benevolent concerns of the church so that the elders may devote themselves without distraction to the biblical priorities of their office (*Acts 6:3-4*). Deacons must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and

under the oversight of the elders (*1 Tim. 3:10; Acts 20:17, 28; 11:30*).

Paragraph B. *Number of Deacons and Length of Term.* The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall choose as many as are needed for the work to be done from among the men who give evidence of having the scriptural qualifications for the office (*Acts 6:3*). These may all continue in office as long as they remain qualified, able, and willing to serve (*1 Pet. 5:2*), and as long as they hold the confidence of the congregation.

Paragraph C. *Qualifications of Deacons.* The qualifications for a man chosen to fulfill the office of deacon are particularly set forth in *Acts 6:3* and *1 Tim. 3:8-13*. Any man called to this office must be able conscientiously to affirm his agreement with our Confession of Faith and submission to the Constitution of the church. Should he at any time change his convictions respecting these standards, he is under moral obligation to make this fact known to the church (*Ps. 34:13; Eph. 4:25; Mt. 5:37*).

Paragraph D. *Chairmanship of the Deacons.* To help the diaconate function in an efficient and orderly manner (*1 Cor. 14:40*), the elders, in consultation with the deacons, shall choose one of the deacons to serve as chairman and another as vice-chairman. The chairman shall be responsible to organize and lead the regular deacons' meetings and to communicate regularly with the eldership concerning diaconal business and concerns. In his absence the vice-chairman shall undertake these responsibilities.

Section 4. *Recognition and Installation of Church Officers.*

Paragraph A. *General Statement.* The local church, under the guidance of the Scriptures and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, is responsible to appoint men to the offices of elder and deacon. Each potential officer should have a desire for the office, and the church should recognize the call of Christ as it observes in the man evidence of the graces and gifts which Scripture requires for the particular office. In no case may a man be nominated to either office without his prior consent (*1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:2*).

This responsibility to recognize the gifts of Christ to His church is a matter of such importance that it should be discharged with much prayerful waiting on God for guidance, a careful consideration of the relevant passages of Scripture, and an objective evaluation of each man considered for office. These activities are the responsibility of each individual member of the church (*Acts 6:1-6*).

Paragraph B. *Process of Recognition.* Recognition of officers occurs through nominations and congregational approval.

(1) Nominations. Nominations to the office of elder or deacon shall be made by the elders (*Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5*). In order to assist the elders in their task of nominating men, the elders will seek the input of the congregation by various means, such as a yearly advisory survey or temporary committee or asking individual members for input during pastoral visits. Every member is urged seriously to consider whether he perceives any men to be qualified for office and to communicate the names of such men to one of the elders directly or through the means appointed by the elders, such as an advisory survey. The elders will prayerfully and with biblical objectivity consider the input from the congregation and determine whether any of the men recommended should be nominated.

At any time during the year the elders may nominate men to either office and call a special congregational business meeting for their consideration. Likewise, members are free at any time to communicate to the elders the names of men whom they consider to be potential officers.

2) Congregational Approval. There must be a minimum period of one month from the time of a man's nomination until the meeting called for his public examination and congregational vote. During this period the members have a solemn obligation prayerfully to assess the nominee in the light of relevant passages of Scripture. Any member who has reservations about the man's fitness for office should contact him or one of the elders. Failure to resolve the reservation to the elders' satisfaction may warrant postponement of the congregational vote.

When the time comes to consider a nomination during a business meeting of the church, the candidate for office and any members of his immediate family who are present shall be requested to leave the room while his qualifications are discussed by the congregation in the fear of God and the light of Scripture (*1 Tim. 3:1-3; Titus 1:5-9*). After that, a written ballot shall be taken. It is desired that the vote of the congregation be unanimous, but if unanimity is not realized, no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an officer.

Paragraph C. Installation. Following the recognition of an officer by vote of the congregation, he shall be publicly installed in his office at a regular worship service by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the existing elders on behalf of the church (*Acts 6:6; 14:23; 1 Tim. 4:14*). If there is no elder presently in office, elders from the Advisory Council shall select at least two of their number to perform this function.

Section 5. Discipline of Church Officers.

Paragraph A. Warrant for the Discipline of Officers. While elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Therefore,

each elder is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same discipline as are all the members of the church, but must adhere to a more rigorous standard of conduct than other members (*Gal. 2:14; 1 Tim. 5:20*). Deacons likewise are under the oversight of the elders and are subject to the discipline of the church. In addition to the ordinary strictures of public reproof and censure, suspension of privileges, and excommunication, officers are subject to removal from office as part of the disciplinary action of the church (*1 Tim. 3:2*).

Paragraph B. Procedure for the Discipline of Officers. The process of discipline may be initiated either by the elders or by individual members of the congregation. Any member who is offended by the behavior of any church officer should first approach that officer privately and express his concerns. If the concerns are not resolved, the member should inform the elders of the situation and wait upon them in the determination of the matter (*Mt. 18:15ff*). In the case where a sole elder is involved in such proceedings, the Advisory Council shall assume responsibility to investigate the matter and to recommend congregational action if they judge it to be warranted.

Since this is such a delicate and serious matter, the elders shall proceed with due caution and earnest prayer (*1 Tim. 5:19; Prov. 19:2*). If the elders judge public discipline or removal from office to be necessary, they shall inform the congregation of the basis for the proposed action. If the congregation votes to impose corrective discipline upon the officer under any of the terms of Article VI, he shall be removed automatically from office. If a congregational vote is taken but is less than the majority required to invoke discipline, the officer must submit himself to an immediate vote of confidence and must attain a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting in order to remain in office.

Section 6. Termination of Office.

Paragraph A. Reasons for Termination.

(1) By Voluntary Resignation. An officer may resign his office without prejudice if for good and valid reasons he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties of it with a good conscience (*Acts 24:16*).

(2) By Removal for Non-culpable Incompetence. In cases where the elders determine that an officer is no longer competent to fulfill all the duties of his office, by reason of infirmities not of themselves culpable (*2 Sam. 21:15-17*), they shall explain their concerns to him and seek his resignation. If he will not resign, they shall present their concerns to the congregation and call for a vote of confidence in him. In order to retain his office in such circumstances the officer must receive a vote of

confidence by no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting.

(3) By Loss of the Confidence of the Congregation. The elders may call for a vote of confidence in any officer at any time. The elders will set forth their recommendation in the matter and the reasons for it. In order to retain his office in such circumstances the officer must receive a vote of confidence by no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting.

(4) By Removal through Disciplinary Action of the Church. An officer may be removed from office by congregational vote according to Section 5 of this Article.

Paragraph B. Implications of Termination.

(1) When a man leaves office he no longer retains the authority of that office and may no longer continue in its functions, privileges and titles in relation to this church, other churches and society at large.

(2) It is expected that all former officers will respect the sanctity of the trust previously given to them and that they will maintain the confidentiality of all ecclesiastical matters to the extent required by Scripture, this Constitution and the judgment of the existing elders (*Prov. 11:13*).

(3) A former officer may be considered again for office, but only in the manner prescribed in Section 4 of this Article.

Article IX TRUSTEES

Section 1. In order to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (*Mt. 22:21*), this church was incorporated under the Laws of the State of New Jersey, on April 14, 1967. While the Scriptures do not recognize trustees as a biblical church office, our Certificate of Incorporation and the Laws of the State of New Jersey require that trustees be elected by the church to represent the church in the execution of corporate legal documents.

Section 2. The board of trustees shall consist of three members, one of whom shall be elected by the corporation (the church) at each annual business meeting for a term of three years. Each member so elected shall serve until his successor shall be elected. A trustee may be elected to succeed himself. Trustees may be elected from among the church officers or from the congregation at large.

Section 3. The trustees shall perform such legal and business transactions as are specifically designated to them by the laws of the State of New Jersey. In the discharge of their duties, they shall act only at the direction of the elders of the church, and where required by law and by our corporate documents, with the consent of the congregation.

Article X CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

Section 1. *General Statement.* There shall be three categories of meetings under this Constitution. These are (1) the annual business meeting; (2) other business meetings requiring congregational votes; and (3) meetings called for purposes not requiring a congregational vote.

Paragraph A. The annual business meeting shall be for the purpose of receiving reports from the elders, deacons, and any church ministries from which a report is requested by the elders; for the election of trustees; for the election of men to the Advisory Council; and for the transaction of other business, which may include the initial election of elders and deacons.

Paragraph B. Other business meetings requiring a congregational vote may include, but not be limited to, the initial election of elders and deacons; matters involving the purchase and sale of church properties; replacement elections for trustees, if necessary; and certain matters of church discipline as set forth in Article VI of this Constitution.

Paragraph C. Meetings called for purposes not including a congregational vote may include, but not be limited to, meetings for the hearing of special reports or seeking the counsel of the congregation; meetings called to announce certain actions of the elders not requiring congregational votes; meetings called on an emergency basis to advise the congregation of serious matters of concern, in advance of a meeting requiring a congregational vote; and meetings called for the purpose of instructing the congregation in rules of conduct so that everything is done decently and in order in our life together.

Section 2. *Notice of Meetings.*

Paragraph A. No less than ten days' notice shall be given of the annual business meeting and other business meetings requiring congregational votes. Notice shall include posting a written notice of the meeting and announcements made at the stated meetings of the church.

Paragraph B. Meetings called for purposes not including a congregational vote may be called upon shorter notice.

Section 3. Quorum. The regular and temporary members present at any properly convened congregational business meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 4. Chairmanship. As a general rule, the chairman or vice-chairman of the board of elders shall preside at congregational business meetings. In the case of their absence or inability to serve, or due to the nature of the business being considered, the elders may appoint another officer to preside.

Section 5. Voting.

Paragraph A. In order that the conduct of church business may be an expression of the mind of Christ, and not merely of men, the members of the congregation must form the judgments expressed in their voting in subjection to the Word of God and in prayerful reliance upon the Spirit of God who indwells them (*Acts 15:22,25-28; 13:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:19; Acts 6:2-7; 1 Jn. 2:27*).

Paragraph B. All regular and temporary members in good standing may vote on any question properly brought before the congregation. Unanimity of heart and mind shall at all times be sought and prayed for (*Acts 6:5*), but when unanimity is not realized, not less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required to make any resolution valid.

Section 6. Closed Meetings. Meetings involving the exercise of corrective discipline shall be open only to regular and temporary members of the church and to those whose presence the elders deem appropriate and necessary. At the sole discretion of the elders, other meetings may also be limited in the same manner.

**Article XI
AMENDMENTS**

Section 1. This Constitution may be amended by a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting at a duly convened business meeting of the congregation.

Section 2. No proposed amendment may be voted on which has not been distributed to the congregation in written form at least one month prior to such a meeting. Also, during that period and separate from the meeting at which a vote will be taken, there must be at least one stated meeting at which the elders shall present the biblical reasons for the proposed amendment and entertain appropriate questions.