



# Membership Booklet

Revised and Updated  
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## Checklist

- Read *Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon.*
- Read *About Holy Trinity Church...Distinctives – Why Church Membership?*
  
- Read *Potted Version of the Westminster Confession of Faith*
  
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## **Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hades. On the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

## **Nicene Creed**

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;  
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; and His kingdom shall have no end.  
And we believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets. And we believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## **Definition of Chalcedon**

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-

bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and united in one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.

## **About Holy Trinity Church**

Holy Trinity Church was established as a mission church of Christ Church, Spokane, on October 21, 2007. Kenton Spratt served as our first pastor until 2013 when he moved to become one of the pastors at Christ Church, Spokane. Jeff Moss served until March, 2015, when Edwin Iverson was called to serve as pastor. In the summer of 2019 Luke McGuire was elected as our first onsite elder. In October, Luke was recognized by the presbytery as elder for HTC and our church was formally brought into membership of Knox Presbytery, one of 6 presbyteries in the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches. (7, now) In May of 2024, Jody Jacobs was elected by the heads of household to the office of elder.

## **Distinctives**

### **Reformed and Evangelical**

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At Holy Trinity Church we confess the ecumenical creeds, which unite us with the great body of Christians throughout time and around the world. (the descriptive term is “confessional”) In addition to these, we hold to the great teachings upheld by the sixteenth-century *Reformation* of the Church, beginning with the sovereignty of God in all things. God’s sovereignty is the foundation of the Good News of salvation in the Kingdom of God through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. As an evangelical church that falls (mostly) within the Presbyterian tradition, (representative government; Calvinist. etc) we at HTC subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646). However, the holy Scriptures themselves, being the Word of God, are our final and infallible written authority for both faith and practice.

### **Emphasis on Biblical Families**

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As the most basic unit in church and society, the family can hardly be overemphasized. At Holy Trinity Church we encourage husbands and fathers to **embrace their covenantal responsibility** as heads of their households, (responsible for all that goes on in their home)...and to give themselves to nurture their wives and children as they grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wives and mothers are encouraged to **submit joyfully to their husbands** (difference in role...or office...not difference of value or rank), to be workers in the home (Titus 2:5) and to nurture their children in Christ. Moreover, children are taught to love the Lord their God, to obey their parents, and to seek God's blessing upon themselves and their descendants. The local church should **assist and equip** parents for spiritual leadership in their homes but never replace them.

We adhere to the ancient practice of **Paedo-communion**. From infancy, children worship with their family, and with the family of God gathered at Holy Trinity Church. Each week, the worship service concludes by the congregation sitting together with Jesus at the table of communion. We do not exclude children from partaking of the Lord's table. There is no set age...rather it is the parent's responsibility to determine when their children should come to the table. The *general* rule is...when baptized children are old enough to realize that something is going **on and they want to be part of it**...it is then time for them to come to the table.

## Optimistic Eschatology

We believe that "the knowledge of the LORD shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). (in time and in history) However, this grand hope is NOT accomplished through political activism, but through the **bold preaching of the Word of God** in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Expository Preaching

Because elders are enjoined to teach God's whole counsel, Holy Trinity Church's normal (but not exclusive) mode of preaching is consecutive, verse-by-verse exposition. (with plenty of opportunity for **application**.)

## Church Community

Members of Holy Trinity Church covenant together under God to encourage one another to love God and each other, **seeking to edify one another** by using their gifts; assisting one another by providing for needs; and together serving the church and community-at-large. In the words of Jesus, "By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

## Elders & Deacons

Holy Trinity Church is served by **Edwin Iverson**, Pastor; and by **Luke McGuire**, and **Jody Jacobs**, Elder.

According to Acts, chapter 6, Pastors and elders are responsible to shepherd the church body, and to concentrate on the ministry of prayer and the Word. Coming alongside them as ministers of mercy are our deacons:

**Deacons** The deacons are listed...their year of beginning service in parenthesis.

Dave Sitler (2012) deacon emeritus

John Anderson (2012)

Jody Jacobs (2019) now serving as elder

Tim Galagher (2019)

Nick Force (2021)

Zach Ringer (2024)

## Doctrinal Statement

In addition to the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and the Definition of Chalcedon, we subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) with a few exceptions (available for inspection by request) Election to office requires subscription to the WCF; but becoming a member does NOT require subscription to the WCF. The Westminster Confession defines what we believe and teach-*it does not define the boundaries of our fellowship.*

## Affiliation and Accountability

Christ Church is a member of the **Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches** [[www.crechurches.org](http://www.crechurches.org)], a communion of like-minded churches committed to spiritual growth and mutual accountability.

The denomination has its roots in 1993 when 3 churches in the Northwest wanted to make a statement about diversity within church unity. Leaders of these churches believed passionately in the holy doctrines of the church as expressed in the ecumenical creeds (the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon). They were also "sons of the Protestant Reformation;" but they also recognized that there were things of lesser importance that kept like-minded Christians from Christian unity and fellowship.

It was determined therefore to found a new communion of churches that **leaned against unnecessary sectarianism** and that leaned toward unity. One of the motivating factors was the passage in John 17, where Jesus prayed "Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, *that they may be one, even as we are one.*"

The outcome of the first meetings of the CREC was the adoption of three statements of faith that in times past have functioned to divide the world of Reformed Christianity.

It was determined that any church wishing to join the CREC must adopt one of these statements of faith: The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Three Forms of Unity, or The London Baptist Confession of 1679. Therefore, while our churches may differ on such things as the timing and mode of baptism, or on the form and substance of Church government...we are all united around the non-negotiables of the ancient creeds and the principles of the Protestant Reformation.

Each church is accountable to vows taken when joining the denomination. As each local body is responsible to discipline individual members, so each church is accountable to the local presbytery and to its duly elected officers.

## Why Church Membership?

### Church Membership – Why?

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

1 Peter 5: The elders are encouraged to shepherd those who were in their charge – and to not be domineering over them – but rather to be examples to them.

3 John 10 – Here we have a rogue elder attempting to “put out of the church” those who recognized the apostolic authority of John.

1 Cor. 5:1-2, 13 A man who is sexually immoral must be “removed from among you.” The church must “Purge the evil person from among you.”

Not everyone who names the name of Christ is a true Christian. Not everyone who is baptized is a true Christian. We attempt to sort that out by using the process of membership. Are we always right? No. Therefore there is a process for putting false members out of the church (church discipline.)

### **Leaders of the people of God** (elders and then deacons)

This system of governance was already familiar to the early church because it grew out of the Jewish synagogue. There were Elders of the synagogue: The people came to them to make spiritual judgment. How did they become elders? They were **elected** by members of the local synagogue. This practice was carried over to the early church. (Acts, ch. 6)

From time to time we have elections. Who gets the ballot? Members of HTC become the electors. Membership vows are a **governmental** act, not a sacramental act.

Why do we count membership by household? Because our little ones are members – but they do not vote for elders or purchasing property. They are, however, represented by their head. Q. When should they become their own “head?” A. When they are ready to be mustered for war. (age 20, Number ch. 1) Women are not barred from being a head of household. These are members who are widows – or in, in some cases, those who are spiritual widows

### **A POTTED VERSION OF THE KIRK’S FAITH**

(boiled down to the essentials)

1] **Of the Holy Scriptures.** The Bible was given for our guidance in life and is inspired by God. It consists of *sixty-six books*, as we have them. *The Apocrypha*, and other writings of early times, are regarded by us as merely human historical documents. The Holy Spirit uses the Bible to teach us all we need for Salvation, so the Word points to Christ.

2] **Of God the Holy Trinity.** God is not just One Person but Three-in-One Equal Persons. He is One in Purpose and in Being: undivided. He is supreme, wise, holy, loving and just: no Person of the Trinity should be exalted above another. God deserves all our worship.

3] **Of God’s Eternal Decree.** God is supremely knowing and just, and so He has ordained who will be saved and who will not. These decisions are not forced on us unjustly but are revealed in how we choose to live our lives and respond to God’s righteous call to repent.

4] **Of Creation.** God made the universe and all things visible and invisible. All people, and some angels, have fallen from Grace, and we all deserve God’s punishment. The evidence for this, in all human beings made in God’s image, is our discerning conscience.

5] **Of God’s Providence.** God is so much in control that He has ordained everything without doing any violence to human free will. *We will* choose, and the choices will confirm in us the way we take, to Eternal Life or Death. God allows Christians to make mistakes to teach them lessons; yet by Grace we still tend towards Heaven. His enemies go from bad to worse, blaming God for everything they don’t like or understand. The circumstances that make a Christian draw *near* to God drive confirmed unbelievers *away*.

6] *Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and Sin's Punishment.* By falling away from God, in seeking their will, not His, human beings brought on themselves spiritual deadness and were tainted with sin. We tend towards it in every area of life and thought. This deadness means that human beings cannot do anything without God's Grace to help them and so, by rejecting God as they do as if He were dispensable, not giving him due honour, they attract to themselves the misery and destruction after death which sin merits. Christians, commit sins too but through faith, Christians experience a death-blow to Sin's power to enslave them.

7] *Of God's Covenant with Man.* God's first agreement with mankind, symbolized by Eden, was the *Covenant of Works*, an agreement to do the right thing, which humans never kept, as the later Old Testament Hebrews' failure to keep the Law of Moses plainly shows. The last covenant, The *Covenant of Grace* is by faith in Christ, because his merits save us despite our failings. {**Exception:** While we agree with the original intent of the Westminster Divines, we believe the usage of the phrase "covenant of works" is open to misinterpretation by modern Christians. By way of clarification, we deny that any covenant can be kept without faith, and we affirm that good works flow out of faith in God, and not vice versa.}

8] *Of Christ the Mediator.* God's people in all ages have benefited from the work of Christ, God's true Son. He became *incarnate* by the Virgin, Mary, was crucified, rose from the dead, ascended to Heaven, and was glorified at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. He was fully divine, yet fully human: He worked miracles not by his own will (magic), but in the anointing of the Spirit. As the fulfilment of everything the Old Testament meant by prophets, priests and kings, Christ became *the Perfect Mediator* between God and us. Christ's work on the Cross is *unique*.

9] *Of Free Will.* Our free will tends towards sin, because of the Fall. When someone becomes a Christian, they are set free from sin's tyranny yet not so completely that they cannot commit sins. Only in the final bliss of Glory will they be made perfect, like Christ.

10] *Of Effectual Calling.* Effectual calling means simply that it really saves us. God calls people by His Word and Spirit to repentance. If they are babies who die within the circle of faith, or if they are people who for some reason cannot be called in the normal

way by the Gospel, but are predisposed to serve God, God can save them by some extraordinary means.

11] **Of Justification.** When God saves someone, it is not by “making them good” but *by pardoning their sins through faith in Christ alone and His saving work on the cross.* The work is *His*; we receive it by *faith*. Christ died to pay for the sin of all His people, and willingly entered the Hell we deserve, in the darkness of His spiritual torment over three days, giving a justification that is by faith in Christ and in His finished work alone. Only the Holy Spirit can apply Christ’s work to each one savingly, justifying us before God. If we believers offend God, He may withdraw from us a while to teach us the value of *Salvation*, but He will never leave us nor forsake us and it is false to teach that He will.

12] **Of Adoption.** Those who are born on earth are natural children, but also dead in sin, and under God’s anger. Those who receive the Holy Spirit by faith in Jesus Christ are the *true children of God*, created by the Spirit’s *Adoption*. They can call God their true Father and expect Him not only to care for them, but also, like a Father, to discipline them well.

13] **Of Sanctification.** Those who are effectually called are saved by *conversion*, or new birth (John 3:3). This is a spiritual change in them which sets God on the throne of their lives. Sin in them begins to be weakened or put to death (*mortification*) so that they live a new life of holiness, without which none of us shall see the LORD. Growing in holiness is called ‘*sanctification*’ (from Latin ‘*sanctus*’ – meaning ‘*holy*’). This results in an *inner war* between temptation and God’s will that last life-long, and have various victories and temporary defeats in it. However, its end result in God’s people is that by the Holy Spirit’s leading and the Word’s encouragement, they learn to obey God, overcome Sin and live an increasingly holy life for Him

14] **Of Saving Faith.** The grace of faith, by which God’s people are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ alone. Normally it is done by the *Ministry of the Word of God*; it is strengthened by reading the *Word*, by the true administration of the *Sacraments*, and *Prayer*. These are called the *Means of Grace*. This can be a struggle, as faith can be attacked from different quarters, but it makes us stronger.

15] *Of Repentance Leading to Life.* Repentance leading to life is an evangelical grace and every Minister should preach this, along with the doctrine of faith in Christ alone. By this grace, a sinner sees and feels the danger of his sins, their abhorrent nature and their contradiction of God's holiness and power. He grasps God's mercy in Christ, and turns from his sins, determined to walk in His ways. This free grace is God's alone to give. No sinner deserves Heaven by his own repentance because it is not *his* work, *but God's work in him*, that leads to genuine repentance and life, and it is essential for our Salvation that God does that work in us Himself. The smallest sin will keep complacently unforgiven people out of Heaven; by contrast, the largest sin will not damn those who have truly repented before God.

16] *Good Works.* Good works are those which God commands (Eph. 2:8-10). Our capability of doing good works is not from ourselves, but is by the Spirit of Christ alone, who gives believers the will and ability to do the things that please God. And such is God's gracious love that, *through Christ*, He accepts our worship and works. By contrast, those who have not repented before God but believe in their own virtue and do it for self-glory or a sense of personal well-being, do not please God. They do good works which are only unintentionally for His Glory (since they result from common gifts and grace which He gave to Mankind) but they are of no *eternal* benefit nor profit to the doer.

17] *Of The Perseverance of the Saints.* People who have been accepted by God in His Beloved Son, effectively called and sanctified by His Spirit can never fully or finally fall out of the state of grace but will certainly continue to the end and be eternally saved. This *perseverance of the saints* does not result from their free will but from God's faithfulness to the change He has worked in them as a result of the eternal covenant made with His people. So God's people may fall into serious sins and suffer for it (and others along with them) because of the temptations of Satan, and of the World, but they will still be saved.

18] *Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation.* Although worldly people may deceive themselves in their pride that they are bound for Heaven, it is possible for true Christians to have assurance in the God who will never disappoint them, based on the evidence in the Word and the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, who is the pledge guaranteeing our inheritance. Nevertheless, such are the battles of the Christian life that a Christian may wait long and hard before experiencing the assurance and peace he longs for. Therefore, each Christian should make due regular use of the Means of Grace

(i.e. Worship, Praying, the reading of the Bible, hearing it preached) and not grow careless, because the struggle of the Christian life can see our joys robbed by personal failures and sorrowful events, as well as God's testing times sent upon us. Yet, true believers are kept from despair and are not deprived of the graces which, in due time, will revive them, by God's Spirit.

19] ***The Law of God.*** The story of Adam and Eve reveals that human beings had another way to heaven, theoretically, in the beginning, which was by keeping God's commands perfectly. However, although they were empowered with free will, they did not take that route, but fell prey to temptations of the knowledge of good and evil. After this *Fall*, this was the only law, though it was consistently broken. On Mt. Sinai, in later Old Testament times, *Ten Commandments* were given in stone. This ethical code is usually called the *Moral Law*. In addition, God gave regulations for ritual and offerings. These, called the *Ceremonial Law*, have been discontinued since Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, which ended sacrifice as formerly practiced. The Ten Commandments were not abolished, but strengthened, by Christ. Yet unlike the Old Testament situation, God's *Moral Law* does not condemn *believers*, but acts for them, as guide and warning. It tells them about God's will and reveals unseen sins as they reflect on the law's implications.

20] ***Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience.*** The freedom which Christ has bought under the Gospel means freedom from the guilt of sin. God alone is Lord of the human conscience, and has left it free from human demands contrary to his Word, or blind, irrational obedience. Since Salvation brings responsibility, no-one may cherish sins or lusts under the excuse of 'freedom of conscience' without dishonoring the Lord of the conscience whom he should serve in reverence.

21] ***Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day.*** Religious worship is for the Triune God alone, through Christ the *only* Mediator. Prayer with thanksgiving is a special act of worship which God requires of all people. It is to be made appropriately in the name of Christ the Son, by the Spirit, in accordance with God's will, and in a known language. Worship consists of reading the Scriptures with godly fear, sound preaching and conscientious and obedient hearing, with faith, understanding and reverence, singing of psalms, and true administration of the Sacraments. Worship is not tied to buildings, but public worship is not to be neglected, as it is a solemn responsibility. One day in seven is ordained as an especially holy time for rest and worship, and although Christ's resurrection has changed this to the first day of the week (Sunday) it is *to continue to the end of the World* as a Christian Sabbath: on it we do only works of necessity and mercy.

{**Exception:** We believe that along with works of piety, necessity, and mercy, the command also calls us to *rest physically* on the Sabbath (Gen. 2:2-3; Ex. 16:30; 31:15-17).}

22] *Of Lawful Oaths and Vows.* A lawful *oath*, or promise, is part of Christian worship: on proper occasions, for a good purpose (i.e., not boasting, or to cover up a sin), a person asks God to witness what he swears. Lawful authority, like a court, has power to require him to so swear. The name of God is the only name by which we are to swear.

23] *Of Civil Government.* Civil authority is established by God, its justice upheld by God and answerable to God. Christians may hold public office and defend civil authority by just war. Civil authorities may not control sacraments or government of the Church. It is the duty of every Christian to pray for those in the State, honour them, pay taxes, obey lawful commands, and be subject to authority for the sake of conscience.

24] *Of Marriage and Divorce.* Monogamy is God's plan for the mutual help of husband and wife, the legitimate increase of humankind, the production of holy children for the Church and the prevention of immorality. Anyone can marry, on their informed consent, yet it is the duty of Christians to marry in the Lord. If adultery or fornication is committed by someone promised to marry, before the wedding, the innocent party has just cause to withdraw from the agreement. If it occurs after marriage, the innocent party has the right to sue for divorce, and remarry. It is only by adultery or desertion that divorce is justified, and it must be done legally.

25] *Of The Church.* The True Catholic or Universal Church is *invisible to us*, for it consists of the full number of God's people (or *Elect*) who were, are, and shall be called into the One Church under Christ, its Head and Bridegroom. *The Catholic Church on earth* is visible and consists of all those throughout the world who profess the True Faith, together with their children. It is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the House and family of God, and there is no *ordinary* possibility of salvation out of it. In order to gather His people, and to perfect the saints in this life to the end of the world, Christ has given to this *universal, visible* Church: the message to be proclaimed, and the ordinances of God to be observed, all of which He makes effective for His purposes by His Spirit. There is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15-18; Ephesians 1:22).

26] *Of The Communion of The Saints.* All the saints (i.e. believers made holy by their profession of Christ, who became a substitute for them on the cross) are united to Jesus Christ, and have fellowship with him in His grace, suffering, death, resurrection and glory. United also to one another in love, they share each other's gifts and graces and are obliged to help one another in both spiritual and everyday matters, but a Christian should not view another Christian's property as *automatically* bound to be shared by him.

27] *Of Sacraments in General.* Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace, directly instituted by God, and representing Christ and His benefits. In every sacrament there is a spiritual relationship between the sign and what it represents (Gen 17:10; Matt 26:27-28).

Yet, the effectiveness of a sacrament does not flow from the sign itself, by magic. Nor does it derive from the character, or the intention, of the Minister. The effectiveness of the sacrament comes from *the Holy Spirit*, through the Word of Institution and the work of the sacrament, *in believers who receive the sacraments rightly* (Matt 28:19-20). There are only two sacraments: ***Christian Baptism*** and ***Holy Communion***. These were instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, on earth, and are not to be celebrated by anyone but a lawfully-ordained Minister of The Word (**Exception:** We believe that the Lord's Supper should not be administered without the *oversight* of an *elder*, lawfully ordained.)

28] *Of Baptism.* Baptism was ordained by Christ to be observed in the Church, from its institution to the ending of the world, in order to mark the admission of someone into the visible Church, and to be a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, of their grafting into Christ, of their regeneration, of the remission of their sins, and of their surrender to a new life. Baptism is to be *by water*, in the Name of *The Father, and of The Son and of The Holy Spirit*, by a *lawfully-called Minister of the Gospel* (Matt 3:11 and 28:19-20; John 1:33). Dipping into the water is not necessary; it is enough to pour or sprinkle water on the person. Not only those who actually profess faith in, and obedience to, Christ, are to be baptized but also the infants of one or both believing parents. Although it is a great sin to despise baptism, because it is wisely commanded by Jesus Christ for his own reasons, salvation is not so linked to baptism that anyone who is *not* baptized is automatically lost; nor is someone who is baptized automatically saved by it, independently of professed faith. In the grace of God, however, what it signifies to believers and children destined also to believe, is set forth, and also conferred, *but in God's time and way*. The Sacrament of Baptism is not to be administered to anyone more than once during

his/her lifetime. **Exception:** We believe that the proper modes of baptism include sprinkling, pouring, *and* immersion.

29] *Of The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion)*. This sacrament, also ordained by Christ to endure until the end of the world, is for the perpetual remembrance of his sacrificial death. It was also instituted as the seal of the benefits of Christ's death to true believers, and to promote their spiritual **nourishment**, increased commitment, and unity with Him and all true believers, as members of his Body (1 Cor 10:16-17, 21; 11:23-26; 12:13). In this sacrament, Christ is not offered again by us, and so the Roman Catholic Doctrine of the Mass, by insisting it has that power, overthrows the Gospel of God's Grace in Christ alone, by faith. The bread and wine communicate Christ to the believer, but they still remain bread and wine in their substance. However, true believers do partake of Christ's Body and Blood by Faith, *inwardly and spiritually, not physically*. Because it is only done by *faith, in relationship*, ignorant and unbelieving persons can *neither benefit from the sacrament, nor abuse Christ by it*.

30] *Of Church Discipline*. Church rule is separate from civil rule. It is established by Christ. Discipline is necessary for reclaiming offending believers, for deterrence of similar offences in others, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might fall on the Church, justly, should it allow His covenant and seals to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders. To achieve good results, the office-bearers of the Church are to proceed appropriately to the offence and its seriousness, and to **admonish** offenders, to **suspend** the offenders from the Lord's Table, or even **excommunicate** them.

31] *Of Synods and Councils*. For running the Church better, and for building up the members, the Lord has established ruling bodies of Ministers and other suitable people to decide on religious affairs. Such ruling councils operate in a more or less organized way, depending how organized the Church is, in a local area. They meet by inherent right and authority, given by Christ, and **may disregard prohibitions of secular authority**. Church councils have made mistakes from the earliest ages and so decisions are subject to validation by Christ.

32] *Of The State of the Dead, and The Resurrection*. After death, the bodies of human beings return to dust and decay, but their souls, being inherently immortal, *immediately* return to God, who gave them (Eccles. 12). The souls of the unbelievers are thrown into Hell, where they stay in torments and utter darkness, reserved for the judgment of the

Great Day. By His power, bodies of the unjustified will be raised to dishonor. By His Spirit, Christ will raise those of the justified to honor, and make them like His glorious body.

33] *Of The Last Judgment and the Eternal State of the Dead.* God has appointed a day on which He will judge the world by righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to all authority to judge the living and the dead has been given by God the Father. God's purpose in appointing that day is to make His mercy and justice known. Christ would not only have us to believe there is a day of judgment, but asks us, although we do not know when that is, to wait for it faithfully.

## **The Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches**

### **CREC Book of Memorials**

#### **Introduction**

Memorials state the position of the CREC on issues on which a confessional statement has not yet been made. Memorials are contained in the Book of Memorials and are incorporated by reference into the Constitution.

A candidate or mission church must declare any exceptions or reservations to the memorials prior to its becoming a CREC member. Member churches must immediately notify the broader assembly of any changes to their position on the memorials. If presbytery determines that the exceptions or reservations place the church at odds with CREC standards, it may initiate proceedings under Article IV.D.3 (CREC Constitution).

The process for adopting a memorial must involve a careful striving for like-mindedness. This deliberate process will help us guard against various fads and winds of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). A memorial must be approved as a draft at a stated council and adopted at a subsequent stated council.

#### **Memorial A. Ordination Exams**

In questions about candidates for ordination, the local session is not judicially bound by the recommendation of presbytery. But when the local church has sought the wisdom of the broader church, agreement with such recommendations is strongly encouraged.

#### **Memorial B. Ministerial Training**

While a formal seminary education *may* prepare a candidate for ordination, our communion strongly prefers ministerial training, under the oversight of local church elders, which maintains high academic and theological standards (including training in the original languages of Scripture), and yet at the same time incorporates an apprenticeship or internship approach within the context of the local congregation.

### **Memorial C. Confessional Revision**

Our process of confessional revision is established so that the differences between our churches may be resolved over time by a careful striving for like-mindedness. The process is established to work in a slow and deliberate fashion so that we will be less susceptible to various fads and winds of doctrine (Eph. 4:14).

### **Memorial D. Christian Education**

All things are to be considered and conducted under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, including education, and especially the education of our covenant children. God has neither charged nor authorized the state to educate children within its civil jurisdiction. God has commanded parents to bring up their children in the education and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4, Deut. 6:7). Given the importance and enormity of the task (Ps. 127:3-5, Deut. 6:7-9), and the impossibility of neutrality in education (Prov. 1:7, Matt. 12:30, Luke 6:40, Col. 2:1-10, 2 Cor. 10:3-5), we do heartily affirm the necessity of educating our children in a manner that is explicitly Christian in content and rigor.

Government schools are, by decree and design, explicitly godless, and therefore cannot be considered a legitimate means of inculcating true faith, holy living and a decidedly Christian worldview in the children of Christian parents.

Parents who do not fully understand the indispensability of Christian education should be warmly received into membership. However, the leaders of Christ's church must thoroughly understand and plainly teach the divine imperative to disciple our children, the divine prohibition of rendering unto Caesar those who bear God's image (Matt. 22:20-21), the divine warning to those who cause their little ones to stumble (Matt. 18:6) and the divine promises to those who raise their children in faith (Deut. 7:9, Ps. 102:5-7, Ps. 103:17-18, Prov. 22:6, Luke 1:48-50, Acts 2:39).

### **Memorial E. Creation**

The doctrine of creation lies at the heart of Christian living, deeply embedded within our assumptions about worship, knowledge, faith, celebration, beauty, and redemption.

In recent decades, many conservative evangelicals have been moved by the science of the day to oppose the historic view of creation in six sequential days of common length, several millennia in the past. Instead, they hold that the bare ideas of creation presented in Genesis have little to do with the actualities of creation. Falsely pitting poetry and symbolism against history, they distort the text of Scripture and divorce ideas from the created order in ancient Gnostic fashion.

Science changes like the wind, and therefore its authority ought to pale beside the Spirit-led, traditional exegesis of creation in six days of common length. Intimidation by apparently more sophisticated non-Christian knowledge-priesthoods is not new. Over the centuries, God has regularly tested the Church's courage to stand loyal to His revelation over against the ever-changing sciences of the day, those "profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge."

#### **Memorial F. Terrorism**

Following the acts of terror perpetrated against the United States of America on September 11, 2001, the member churches of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches\* – affirm the following:

1. Because God is God (omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, triune, etc), all of history is under His control. Nothing happens apart from His knowledge and without His divine decree. Therefore, we must view these recent events in the light of God's sovereignty rather than from the carnal point of view. It is God who has brought this disaster upon the United States (Amos 3:6). While not denying that wicked individuals committed these acts, we affirm that God was active in these events for His glory and honor.

2. Both the United States of America and Canada continue to sin against the true and living God, and His Son Jesus Christ, and have slipped into wholesale idolatry and polytheism. Our countrymen have done this in the name of tolerance and acceptance, tolerating everything except the truth. Our civil and religious representatives tell damnable lies when they say that the faiths of Abraham and Mohammed are the same, that Yahweh and Allah are the same, that the living God wants His people to commune with infidels, and that we regard as enemies those who believe in such a thing as truth (Ex. 20:3, John 4:22, Eph. 4:3-6). These are the lies we and our countrymen bid our leaders to tell us, lies which we believe to our own destruction. Therefore, God has brought this judgment upon the United States as a warning to her and to any nation

that turns its face against the living God. The only faithful response is confession of sin, drawing near to Jesus Christ, and repentance (Joel, *passim*).

3. Apart from repentance we will find no blessing for our nations in these events. God is not blessing our lands in this attack by drawing the people of the United States together, and the people of Canada and of other nations together, in furthering some sort of humanistic neighborhood. Being an American, or a Canadian, is not the same as being a Christian.

4. It is appropriate for the United States to respond to a terrorist attack by using military force in order to bring the terrorists to justice. Furthermore, it is lawful for believing Christians to participate in this military response.

5. It is not lawful for women to be mustered for combat service, for our Lord has declared it an abomination for women to don the martial attire of a man (Deuteronomy 22:5). Christian fathers must protect their daughters from being seduced or coerced into such a circumstance, and the Church must support them as they do so.

6. It is not lawful to respond in the name of the false gods we currently worship, with a proud and arrogant spirit. The United States and her allies have no right whatever to expect God to bestow blessing upon any military responses so long as our peoples embrace the idols of pluralism, protect the carnage of abortion, muster our daughters for combat service, and honor the perversions of sodomy. Though it is lawful and right for the United States to respond militarily, if her people continue to protect these and other corruptions as a way of life, they cannot expect to enjoy God's blessing upon such endeavors, or anything other than continued judgment both on the battlefield and off.

Therefore, mindful of this judgment of God, the churches of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches set aside September 11, 2002, as a day of prayer and fasting, that we may unite in confessing the sins of our respective nations.

### **Memorial G. Homosexuality**

*Courage, Clarity, and Charity: A Phoenix Declaration January 2003*

As Christian ministers standing in the stream of historic Christianity and rooted in the Evangelical heritage, we believe it is time to speak with courage, clarity, and charity to the issue of homosexuality that is besetting the Church at large. Confessing the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God (Isaiah 40:8; Luke 4:31-32; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-

21), we believe that God has spoken clearly and sufficiently to the issue of human sexuality. In accordance with this belief, we must state that homosexuality in its varied forms, whether gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, is out of accord with God's design for human sexuality and is sinful, therefore, in the eyes of God (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-25; 19:1-28; Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-10; 2 Peter 2:6-8). The only remedy for this, and all other sin, is found in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11). As ministers of this glorious gospel of God's grace, who are striving after faithfulness to God and His Word, we state the following as a call to the Church to return to faithfulness in a spirit of repentance.

1. *Courage*

In our time, many who are recognized as clergy are calling for and promoting a revision of the historic Christian understanding of God's Word concerning homosexuality. This teaching is out of accord with the Bible and leads the flock of Christ astray. Such teaching arrogantly overturns God's holy standard dealing with human sexuality. Love for Christ and His Church compels us to speak truthfully about that which is false. Courage is needed to refute those who would call evil good and good evil. The example and teaching of the Lord Jesus and His apostles show clearly that false teachers are to be exposed and refuted so that the Church is protected (Acts 20:28-31; Romans 16:17-18; Titus 1:9; 2 Peter 2:1-3). In an age that tolerates everything but the truth, courage is needed to speak the truth in love in an uncompromising manner.

2. *Clarity*

The Bible provides a clear and consistent teaching in opposition to homosexuality. Modern attempts to subvert this clear teaching are without substance. The Word of God must not be held prisoner to alien philosophical or cultural agendas. If allowed to speak with its own authority, the Biblical teaching is seen to be utterly opposed to homosexuality and its attendant practices. Furthermore, the historic testimony of Christian interpretation is in perfect harmony with this position. Contrary to popularized agendas, the Bible and those who have officially taught Christianity throughout the ages have recognized the sinfulness of homosexuality. The interpretations of such teachers as Athenagorus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Lactantius, Eusebius, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Augustine are unanimous. The modern attempt to revise the

Biblical teaching, claiming Biblical and interpretive support, is a theological and moral novelty.

3. *Charity*

Love for neighbor compels us to remind those who are caught in the depths of sin that God in His holiness will not be mocked – He will bring judgment against sin. It is not an act of oppression or hate to point out the Divine condemnation of homosexuality. Rather, it is an act of kindness. We are opposed to the ill-treatment that many people in favor of homosexuality have experienced; yet we deny that our disagreement and presentation of the Bible’s teaching with regard to this subject constitutes ill treatment, hatred, or bigotry. In speaking the truth about the nature of homosexuality and God’s opposition to it, we simultaneously hold forth the message of God’s grace. God can and does forgive those who forsake the sin of homosexuality. God can and does bring freedom from bondage and cleansing of conscience to those who turn to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 3:21-26; 6:1-14; Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Timothy 1:5; Hebrews 10:19-22). It is false compassion to accept and affirm those who are unrepentant in homosexuality. Charity demands that we speak the truth about God’s holiness and His gospel.

**Memorial H.    Worship**

1. We believe that Lord’s Day worship is our highest privilege, our greatest duty, and our deepest joy.<sup>1</sup> God has created us for just this purpose: to worship Him, and to be transformed by Him as we worship.<sup>2</sup>
2. We believe that in worship the people of God are engaged by the Spirit and drawn into the Father's presence as living sacrifices in union with the Risen Christ.<sup>3</sup> In Lord’s Day worship, God renews His covenant relationship with His people by serving them and them serving Him.<sup>4</sup> He draws near to us to draw us near to Him.<sup>5</sup>
3. We believe that in Lord’s Day worship, we are gathered together in the presence of the living God among a glorious assembly consisting of angels, the church militant on earth, and the church triumphant in heaven.<sup>6</sup>
4. We believe that each week in worship, through the Lord’s service to us and our service to Him, our Triune Creator and Redeemer gives us the covenant gifts of glory, knowledge, and life, in and through the assurance of our forgiveness, the preaching of the Word, and the partaking of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>7</sup> While bestowing these gifts upon us in worship, at the same time, He graciously

accepts our praise and thanksgiving of Him.<sup>8</sup> In re-orienting us around His covenant,<sup>9</sup> He empowers and calls us to live in terms of His new creation.<sup>10</sup>

5. We believe that God uses our worship to change us and the world.<sup>11</sup> We are transformed by the grace of God's presence,<sup>12</sup> and leave worship with a renewed sense of, and commitment to, mission,<sup>13</sup> discipleship,<sup>14</sup> and community.<sup>15</sup> Biblical worship results in changed lives, Spirit-empowerment, and impacts the world for Christ. Furthermore, God is pleased to hear and answer our prayers, particularly those that ascend in the Lord's Day worship of the Church.<sup>16</sup> He hears our prayers for the nations and in answering us makes manifest His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.<sup>17</sup>
6. We believe that worship should be informed and governed by the Bible in its entirety.<sup>18</sup> In constructing our liturgies, we are to pay particular attention to those portions of God's Word that are specifically given to inform us of what God desires in worship. These portions include, but are not limited to, descriptions of patriarchal worship, Levitical worship,<sup>19</sup> and Tabernacle of David worship,<sup>20</sup> which all point toward the glorious advent of Jesus Christ, whose self-offering and victorious resurrection accomplished our salvation.<sup>21</sup> This final work of our Savior provides the basis for the resultant transformation of worship spoken of by the Apostles in the New Covenant.<sup>22</sup> We are, of course, prohibited from returning to the practices of animal sacrifices, for this would deny our faith in the perfect and complete sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.
7. We believe that these portions of the Bible give us a divine pattern and sequence of worship,<sup>23</sup> and provide us a detailed understanding of the benefits of Christ, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.<sup>24</sup> These benefits include purification from our sins,<sup>25</sup> transformation of our persons,<sup>26</sup> acceptance of our work and tribute,<sup>27</sup> and peace with God and men.<sup>28</sup> Through Biblical worship, the Lord assures us of the forgiveness of our sins,<sup>29</sup> the Holy Spirit's ongoing work of renewal in our lives,<sup>30</sup> the requirement and acceptability of vocation,<sup>31</sup> and the promise of the increase and maturation of Christian community.<sup>32</sup>
8. We believe that these portions of the Bible also teach us that each of these glorious aspects of worship are to be set in the context of beautiful music that is maturing in both voice and instrument, to the praise of Christ the King.<sup>33</sup>
9. We believe that the proper implementation in love of the above requires a practical understanding of all that Scripture teaches, including an understanding of lesser and greater matters, Christian forbearance with our brothers, liberty in worship which is not self-willed, an avoidance of an over-scrupulous zeal, and a

desire to maintain a Biblical catholicity as we build on the work of the historic church.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ex. 20:8-11, Heb. 4:9; Heb. 10:25, Deut. 26:10, Ps. 29:2, Ps. 27:4, Ps. 65:4, Ps. 73:25; Heb. 4:16

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 43:21; 1Cor. 6:20, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 12:1-2; Jn. 4:23

<sup>3</sup> Lam. 3:41; Ps. 25:1; 28:2; Eph. 2:12-22, Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 12:18-25; Heb. 8:5; Rev. 4:1

<sup>4</sup> Is. 66:20-22, Lk. 22:19; Lev. 1-5

<sup>5</sup> Deut. 4:7; Rev. 3:20, Ex. 24:12; 2 Cor. 6:16b-18; Heb. 10:19 with Heb. 9:11,12

<sup>6</sup> Rev. 9-12, Heb. 12:22-24, Eph. 2:6

<sup>7</sup> Rom. 3:23; 8:30; Jn. 17:22; Rom. 1:21-23; Jn. 17:17; Jn. 17:2,3; Ro. 2:7-10; 1Jn. 2:20, 27; Ps. 115, Rev. 21:11, Jn. 6:53-58, 1Pet. 1:23

<sup>8</sup> Ps. 51:17, Ez. 20:40-41

<sup>9</sup> Ps. 50:5; Mt. 26:28; Heb 8:6; 12:24

<sup>10</sup> Mt. 28:16-20; Jn. 20:19-23

<sup>11</sup> Ps. 22:25-27, Gen. 22:9-18

<sup>12</sup> Rom. 12:1,2; 2 Cor. 3:18

<sup>13</sup> Mt. 28:19a

<sup>14</sup> Mt. 28:19b, 20a

<sup>15</sup> Is. 55:12, Rom. 15:13-14; Mt. 28:20b

<sup>16</sup> 1Kg. 8:26-53, Mt. 18:19-20; Rev. 8:3-6

<sup>17</sup> Mt. 9:38, Mt. 6:9-10

<sup>18</sup> 2Tim 3:16-17; Isa. 8:20; Ex. 20:4-6; Heb. 8:5

<sup>19</sup> Lev. 1-7

<sup>20</sup> 1 Chr. 16:1 ff; 1 Chr. 25; 2 Sam. 6; 2 Chr. 15:14,15; 23:18; 29:25-30; 35:15; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:45,46; Acts 15:16,17

<sup>21</sup> Jn. 1:29; 1Cor. 5:7; Rev. 1:5; Heb. 9:11-14

<sup>22</sup> Acts 15:16,17; Heb. 7:12, Heb. 8:5; 10:19-22; 9:23, 24

<sup>23</sup> Lev. 9:22

<sup>24</sup> Jn. 1:29

<sup>25</sup> Lev. 4,5; Heb. 9:26; 10:12

<sup>26</sup> Lev 1; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 4:16; Gal. 6:15

<sup>27</sup> Lev. 2; Ecc. 9:7

<sup>28</sup> Lev. 3; Rom. 5:1

<sup>29</sup> Lev. 4,5; Col. 1:14

<sup>30</sup> Lev. 1; Rom. 12:1,2

<sup>31</sup> Lev. 2; 2 Thes. 3:10-12; Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 9:13,14

<sup>32</sup> Lev. 3; 1 Cor. 10:17; Eph. 4:11-13; Jn. 17:20

<sup>33</sup> 1Chr. 15:16, 25:6,7; Ps. 98:4-6; 144:9; 150; Rev. 5:8; 14:2,3; 15:2,3

<sup>34</sup> Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:2

# HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

## Constitution

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Appendix A

### PREAMBLE

In the church of God all things are to be done decently and in order. This 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 us, we seek to obey Scripture through the following standards for the orderly and scriptural government of our church, Holy Trinity Church in Colville, Washington. These standards do not supplant Scripture, but rather are an expression of our understanding of biblical church government under God. While seeking to be biblical in structure, we make no claim that every detail found here is expressly taught by Scripture. These standards are primarily procedural; the doctrinal position of the church may be found in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646).

The purpose of this church is to glorify God through submission to His Word in true worship, proclaiming grace in Christ to sinners, and building up the saints through doctrinal and applicatory proclamation of the whole counsel of God, faithful observance of Christ's sacraments, and earnest devotion to prayer.

### ARTICLE I: MEMBERS AND ELECTORS

#### A. Members

The procedures of membership outlined below are designed solely for the purpose of maintaining scriptural and accountable local church government (Heb. 13:17), such that our affairs are conducted in decency and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). In no way is our practice of membership to be construed in such a way as to disrupt our Christian

unity and fellowship with faithful saints who attend church elsewhere (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 3:1-4).

## B. Household Membership

1. Membership in the community of our church will be normally reckoned by household. A household will be eligible when the head of that household meets the following criteria. He or she:

- a. Has been lawfully baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19) and professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10);
- b. Does not contradict his or her baptism and profession through his or her manner of life (Matt. 7:22-23);
- c. Considers his or her permanent residence to be in our geographical region (Eph. 1:1);
- d. Submits to the government of this church (Philemon 2; Heb. 13:7,17).

2. The elders in Session may admit eligible households into membership in Holy Trinity Church based upon the positive testimony of two or more elders who have personally spoken with the head of the household or the individual(s) seeking membership in Holy Trinity Church, and who have heard their profession of faith and ascertained that they have been lawfully baptized. Those seeking membership who make a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but who have not been baptized in a Christian church may be considered for membership after being baptized. Letters of transfer from another Christian church will be accepted, but will not mitigate the above requirements.

All membership in the congregational covenant will be by household, meaning that all members of a household that are not explicitly excluded are included as individuals in covenant with the congregation. Non-baptized individuals of member households are not included as individuals in covenant with the congregation. When a member becomes a head of household through marriage, the new household will be considered a member household.

3. The elders will maintain a membership list, with the members of each household listed in a clear manner, including names, dates of birth and baptism. This membership list will be maintained by the elders and updated annually [HAc1], and is not to be confused with the church directory of addresses and phone numbers.

4. Individuals who satisfy the criteria listed above will be received as a member household with a single member in the following circumstances:

- a. He or she has no family;

- b. Members of his or her family choose to join another church;
- c. Members of his or her family are non-believers.

If through marriage or adoption the individual joins another household that is not a member household of Holy Trinity Church, his or her church membership must be transferred.

Unmarried members who are independent of their parents may request to form their own household (e.g., a young man who becomes self-supporting and lives apart from his parents). The elders will review such requests on a case by case basis.

5. Water baptism is required of those seeking membership. No one will be admitted into membership in the church until baptized. When baptisms are administered by the elders of our church, the mode used (whether by pouring, immersion, or sprinkling) will be determined through arrangement with the person being baptized, or with his parents.

When a baptized believer moves to our church, the elders acknowledge his baptism as Christian baptism in receiving him into the membership of the church.

If the baptism was administered by a non-Christian sect or cult, and the baptism is determined to be no baptism at all, the individual will be instructed on his responsibility to be baptized at the first opportunity. As an act of an ecclesiastical government, a valid baptism does not depend upon the personal integrity of the minister conducting the baptism, or the doctrinal and moral integrity of the administering church. Nevertheless, if the corruptions are such as to require our elders to consider that church to be no Christian church at all, then the baptisms administered by such a church will not be received. Given the complexity of all such issues, the elders will deal with each situation on a case-by-case basis.

6. When the criteria listed above have been fulfilled, a household or individual will be formally received into the membership of Holy Trinity Church before the congregation on the Lord's Day in the following manner.

- a. The individual or head of household will be asked the following questions: 1) "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?" 2) "Have you been baptized in accordance with His Word?" 3) "Do you swear in the name of God, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live in a way that becomes followers of Christ?" 4) "Do you swear in the name of 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 the questions are

addressed to the head of a household, he or she will also be asked if he or she is speaking on behalf of the household.

- b. When an affirmative answer has been given, the members of the congregation will be asked to welcome the individual or household into this covenant relation of membership together with them. They will signify agreement with a corporate "Amen."
- c. One of the elders will offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

### C. Release or Transfer of Membership

1. If a member household or individual member of Holy Trinity Church in good standing requests to be released to the care of another Christian church, the elders will grant the request, and release them with a blessing.
2. If a member household or individual member of Holy Trinity Church requests to be released because of disciplinary proceedings against the individual or anyone in the household, the elders will deny the request until the disciplinary matter is resolved.
3. If a member household or individual member is moving from our geographical area, before they leave the elders will exhort them on their duty to find a new church home. If they have not joined themselves to a new church within six months of moving, the elders will release them from membership in Holy Trinity Church with a letter of admonition. This will be done even if in the interim a situation arises which would normally call for the disciplinary intervention of the church.

### D. Access to the Sacraments

It is assumed that all but very young children and unbaptized persons will be regularly attending the Lord's Supper. However, the elders of the church recognize that each head of household received into membership is responsible before God for the spiritual condition of his household. Therefore, considering that conscientious Christians differ as to when it is appropriate to admit children to the Table, the head of household is invited to make recommendations to the elders concerning his or her household, with the understanding that no one will be admitted to the Lord's Supper who has not been baptized. Under the headship of Christ, the administration of church sacraments (or ordinances) remains with the elders. However, in such administration, the elders are to work in league with the head of the household.

When a child in a baptistic home desires to be baptized and come to the Table of the Lord, the parents should notify the elders, who will arrange for the baptism of the child.

Any baptized child is invited to partake of the Lord's Supper. The head of the household is responsible to carefully and regularly instruct the child in the gospel and the richness and meaning of the Supper.

### E. Electors

Those members of Holy Trinity Church who vote in church elections will be called electors.

1. Qualifications for electors: Electors of Holy Trinity Church are those who are heads of member households. A household is not eligible to vote in an election unless the household is established before the ballot is distributed to the electors.
2. Authority of electors: Electors may vote in the elections of elders and deacons, and provide input to the elders and deacons at a regularly scheduled meeting.
3. Qualified electors: The elders will qualify electors. Three weeks prior to any election to church office, the election will be announced and the ballot will be provided to the electors. Those who desire to vote but who do not receive a ballot may contact the elders. If qualified, they will be provided a ballot in time for the election.
4. Elections: Elections will be conducted at appropriate times set by the elders.
5. Heads of Households meetings: The congregation will hold a regular meeting of heads of member households, which will be the normal channel through which the elders and deacons receive advice from the representatives of the church's households.

#### ARTICLE II: SELECTION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

The selection of officers to lead the church is a vital element of her corporate life. A man may be considered as a potential officer in several ways. He may aspire to the office himself (1 Tim. 3:1), the elders may approach him, or the people of the church may suggest his name to the elders. Once he becomes a candidate, the elders will examine the candidate with regard to his doctrine and manner of life. If the candidate has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's Confession of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the elders of it. All candidates 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; etc.).

If the elders unanimously agree that the candidate is fit for office, then they will nominate him to office. Once nominated, a candidate for elder will work through a short course of training under the oversight of the elders. Prior leadership training administered by pastor/elder will be recognized. When, in their unanimous judgment, the candidate has shown his fitness for office, his name will then be placed on a ballot sent to all electors. A nominated diaconate candidate will be included by the deacons in their work in order to prove his fitness for office (1 Tim 3:10). When, in the unanimous judgment of the Deacons, the candidate has shown this, the deacons will make a recommendation to the elders to place his name on the ballot to which the elders must

give their unanimous consent. Each ballot will provide the option of voting either yes, no, or abstain.

If the candidate receives the unanimous support of the church (Phil. 2:1-4), the elders will ordain the new officer through the laying on of hands and prayer (cf. 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; Acts 6:6).

The requirement for congregational unanimity may be set aside only through the unanimous consent of the elders, and that only after the elders have determined that the objections are unscriptural or unwarranted. However, refusal to overturn these objections does not constitute agreement with the objections on the part of the elders.

If the objections are overturned, then one of the elders will meet with those who objected to discuss the elders' decision.

If a candidate for office is not elected, then one of the elders will meet with him within one week to discuss the election and answer any questions the candidate might have.

Once installed, the elder or deacon will serve for life, unless he resigns or is removed.

## ARTICLE III. DUTIES OF CHURCH OFFICERS

### A. Elders

1. The elders are collectively responsible to oversee the following:

- a. Ruling/shepherding (1 Pet. 5:1-2).
- b. Equipping (Eph. 4:11-12).
- c. Prayer/fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3).
- d. Teaching/preaching (1 Tim. 5:17).
- e. Administering baptism and the Lord's Table (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).
- f. Administering church discipline and restoration (1 Cor. 5:1-5).
- g. Prayer for the healing of the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).
- h. Delegating responsibilities to the deacons, hiring and firing church staff, defining the responsibilities of church staff, and delegating responsibilities to the staff of subordinate ministries. The elders will approve the annual budget.
- i. Commissioning or licensing ministerial students, and overseeing the course of their training for the eldership. Under the guidance and oversight of the board of elders, such commissioned individuals will have the opportunity to perform all the various ministerial functions of elders, participation in the rule of the church being the only exception.

2. Conduct of elders' meetings: All usual business of the elders will be conducted at their regular meetings or at special meetings called for a particular purpose. The

elders will appoint one of their number to moderate the meetings of the elders, and one to record the minutes of the meetings.

3. Responsibilities of individual elders: Elders are responsible for those duties delegated to them by the body of elders, and recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts and desires. Elders with such a charge will serve willingly, and without domineering in the discharge of their assigned duties, whether pastoral or administrative (1 Peter 5:1-3). There is no distinction of rank within the body of elders.

Under Christ, the highest authority in the local church is the board of elders or presbyters in Session. While all the elders are equally involved in ruling the church, some presbyters are to be recognized by the church as also given to the labor of word and doctrine. As elders, all share the same rank and authority without distinction. Nevertheless, the church acknowledges the variety of gifts and callings God gives to men, and recognizes that some of the elders, though equal in rank and authority, are especially gifted and called to preach the Word, and to teach right doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

Holy Trinity Church therefore recognizes two distinct callings or offices related to the Session of elders for this local church. The first is called to a pastoral ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and called by us a minister, or pastor (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:2-4). A second is called to government and rule according to the Word, called by us a ruler or ruling elder (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7,17; Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28). The names used for these callings are descriptive only, not titular or honorific (Matt. 23:8-10).

The ruling elders principally function in the government of the church. The ministers also share in the rule of the church, and in addition are principally responsible for the proclamation of the Word on the Lord's Day, as well as the general oversight of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Each elder will have his calling and office acknowledged by the elders in Session.

In all meetings of the Session of presbyters, each elder has one vote. The meetings of the Session will be moderated by an elder selected by the other elders. In their capacity as a Session, the elders oversee all the affairs of the church, including the particular labors of teachers and ministers.

4. Compensation: Those elders whose assigned duties preclude them from providing for their families in the ordinary way must be compensated by the church (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

B. Deacons

1. Responsibilities of deacons: Under the general oversight of the elders, the deacons will 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, administration of subordinate ministries, office support, and administering the Deacons' Fund.
2. Conduct of deacons' meetings: All usual business of the deacons will be conducted at their regular meeting, or at a special meeting called for a particular purpose. The deacons will appoint one of their number to moderate the meetings of the deacons. The deacons will be prepared to give a general report of their work at each Heads of Households meeting, they will provide a semi-annual financial report to the church, and they will give an annual report to the elders with proposals for the upcoming year.
3. Responsibilities of individual deacons: Individual deacons are responsible for those duties assigned to them by the deacons, as recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts and desires. There is no distinction of rank among the deacons.
4. Administering the Deacons' Fund:
  - a. In the benevolent functions of the church, the deacons are responsible to maintain the biblical standards of money, charity, work, and related issues (Gal. 6:10; 2 Thes. 3:4-16; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:3-4, 8; Is. 10:1-4).
  - b. The Deacons' Fund is available to members of Holy Trinity Church to meet pressing needs. When a need is made known through the elders, deacons, or members of the church, the deacons will examine the scope and urgency of the need and present it to the elders. Upon approval by the elders, the family or individual will be placed on the Deacons' Fund until the need is met or they are removed for other reasons.
  - c. Upon being placed on the list for the Deacons' Fund, the head of the household will be asked to submit an acceptable household budget to the deacons within thirty days. A deacon or elder will be assigned to review the family budget, determine the actual level of need, and give counsel and financial advice as necessary.
  - d. If able, the head of the household is required to work at a full-time job.
  - e. The household will be discouraged from receiving public assistance in the form of food stamps or direct welfare payments, not including medical reimbursements or assistance.
  - f. In case of one-time needs exceeding \$1000, the deacons will seek elder approval for the expenditure at the next regular elder meeting. If the need cannot be met

from the Deacons' Fund, the deacons may seek elder approval to move funds from general savings to meet the need. A household budget will not be required for one-time needs paid in full from the Deacons' Fund. However, a budget will be requested by the deacons if the family stays on the list for the Deacons' Fund after that particular need is met. In case of onetime needs, the deacons may, with elder approval, assist families who are in need but who are not members of Holy Trinity Church. These families are not eligible to stay on the list for the Deacons' Fund after that particular need is met. Non-members may not receive regular assistance from the Deacons' Fund.

- g. Families supported by the Deacons' Fund will be visited by a deacon at least once a month to ensure their financial needs are being met. Budget counseling will be provided by the deacons when necessary. If there are spiritual matters which need attention, the deacons will notify the elders. The deacons will report regularly to the elders on the status of families remaining on the list for the Deacons' Fund more than three months.
- h. Indigent giving will be decided by the deacons on a case-by-case basis. As a general rule the deacons will not disburse money to indigents, but will purchase items necessary to meet basic needs in such areas as food, clothing, shelter, and travel.

#### 5. Christian Education Fund (*intended but not yet functioning*)

- a. The Christian Education Fund is a special category of the Deacons' Fund. Monies from the fund will be available to help qualified families with expenses associated with providing a biblical education for their dependent children, whether for homeschooling, tutorial services, or a private Christian school. The fund will be supplied as an item in the annual budget and through designated gifts.
- b. In ordinary situations, the family concerned will be asked to show its commitment to Christian education through providing as much for their children's' education as their budget will allow. In extraordinary situations, the entire cost may be borne by the fund.
- c. Whenever possible, payments will be made directly to the school, tutorial service , textbook supplier, etc.
- d. Recipients of the Christian Education Fund must qualify fully for the Deacons' Fund.
- e. In addition to Deacons' Fund criteria, the following standards also apply. The elders must have reason to believe that, due to personal or financial constraints, the children are likely to receive non-Christian or sub-standard Christian

education. The family will receive consistent pastoral counseling for the duration of support from the fund, consistent with the circumstances. The deacons will verify that the fund is not being used to pay tuition in such a way as to receive a tax write-off.

- f. Recipients must be re-approved in July for the following school year. After a family has received support for one school year, the deacons will assign a member to review the family's household budget and help them set up a plan to assume the entire cost of their children's education.

### C. Resignation of Elders or Deacons

If an elder or deacon desires to resign his office or take a leave of absence, he will present a letter expressing this desire and explaining his reasons to the board of elders. The elders will notify the men of the church at the next household meeting of their receipt of the letter. If the desire of the elder or deacon concerned is unchanged by the following household meeting, then the elders will read a statement to the assembled men accepting the resignation, or approving the leave of absence.

If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal turpitude, then the elders must exercise biblical discipline prior to, or in conjunction with, any consideration of the letter of resignation.

## ARTICLE IV: REMOVAL OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

If one of the saints believes an elder or deacon may be morally or doctrinally unfit for his office, the scriptural requirement for him is clear: he is to approach that officer individually first (Matt. 18:15), and then with one or two others (Matt. 18:16). If the problem remains, then the individual, with the two or three witnesses, should come to the elder board and present the charges (1 Tim. 5:19).

If the charges are doctrinal or moral in nature, and if the elder board, excluding (if applicable) the accused elder, unanimously decides that the question merits an investigation and/or trial, then they will (a) inform the heads of households of the nature of the charges, (b) announce the date(s) of the scheduled investigation and/or trial, and (c) encourage the heads of households to attend.

If the charges are unanimously sustained by the elders, then the accused elder or deacon, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to correction, may be rebuked in the presence of the congregation (1 Tim. 5:20), or may be removed from the office of elder or deacon (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9), or both.

## ARTICLE V: DISCIPLINE

### A. Informal 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 by confronting brothers and sisters who are in sin and bringing along witnesses when necessary (Matt. 18:15, 16). In the case of open and scandalous sin, there is no requirement to attempt private resolution of the matter, and it should be brought to the elders without delay.

#### B. Formal Church Discipline

If informal discipline does not result in satisfactory correction, then those who are aware of the need for discipline are expected to call the matter to the attention of the elders. Formal discipline will be pursued only after Scriptural prerequisites have been satisfied and the elders have made sufficient inquiry. Such discipline is applied through the formal action and unanimous judgment of the elders. In extraordinary situations, the elders have the authority to take immediate disciplinary action if the honor of Christ or the purity of the church is directly threatened by a failure to act. Except in such extraordinary cases, the pattern of formal church discipline will generally include (1) private admonishment by the elders, (2) formal public admonishment and suspension from the Supper (Thess. 3:14-15), and (3) a formal hearing which may result in being put out of the church (Matt. 18:17) and being delivered over to Satan (1 Cor 5:4,5; 1 Tim 1:20).

#### C. Subjects of Church Discipline

The only persons who may undergo formal church discipline are baptized members of member households. Un-baptized members of member households and Christians who attend Holy Trinity Church regularly (but are non-members) are subject to pastoral admonishment but may not be put out of the church.

Nevertheless, a non-member who is divisive, heretical, scandalous, or factious may be barred from the Lord's Supper and rejected after proper admonition (1 Tim. 3:10). If another church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to Holy Trinity Church, then the Session will honor the discipline of the other church, unless after due consultation with the person concerned and after all appropriate information is considered, the Session unanimously rejects such disciplinary actions as out of accord with the government of Christ.

#### D. Procedures for Church Discipline

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 heads of households 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. The accused will be considered innocent until proven guilty.

At a separate meeting of the elders, 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 will establish an official file containing all the records pertaining to the hearing, including all 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.

#### E. Appeals to Presbytery

Members of Holy Trinity Church may appeal the actions of the Session to the presbytery and/or council of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches. Any appeals to presbytery will be conducted in accordance with the Constitution of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches.

#### F. Restoration of the Party Disciplined

The goal of church discipline is restorative not punitive. Hence, Holy Trinity Church is eager to receive back into her fold those sheep who have wandered. When, in the unanimous opinion of the elders, the one under discipline has repented, he will be publicly restored – a confession of his 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.

### ARTICLE VI. 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. If the individual concerned is also an elder, he is excluded from voting on any matters concerning his own case. If separation of a subordinate ministry from Holy Trinity Church becomes necessary, that action 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.

#### **ARTICLE VII. INCORPORATION**

A. As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Trinity Church is not constituted or incorporated by anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the only head of the church.

B. Holy Trinity Church maintains its status as an unincorporated and unregistered church as a matter of conscience.

C. As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Trinity Church accepts various burdens and entanglements of civil regulation and taxation under protest.

D. Holy Trinity Church has constituted herself, under the authority and headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a *nonprofit organization*, and is recognized as such by the laws of the State of Washington.

#### **ARTICLE VIII. AMENDMENTS**

The Confession of Faith and Constitution may be amended at any time through unanimous consent of the elders, when the following conditions have been first fulfilled.

A. There is a first reading of the proposed change at the following Heads of Households meeting.

B. A written copy of the proposed change(s) is (are) made available to the congregation at church.

C. The elders seek due consultation with the heads of households of the church at a subsequent Heads of Households meeting.

Adopted by HTC February, 2007. Minor revisions and emendations June, 2020,  
December 2024

## Membership at Holy Trinity Church

1. Membership means that you are committing yourself to particular leadership, and to particular people who form part of the greater church. It also means your pastor/elders are committed to your wellbeing and will be held accountable before God for it. There is no way for God's people or leadership to be faithful to "the church" in the abstract. TV and radio programs, blogs, recordings, podcasts, and books are not substitute elders. (1 Cor. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7,17; 1 Thes. 5:12-13)
2. A Christian should normally never be without membership in a church. Baptism is the entrance to the church, and Christians should transfer their membership if they move or desire for their own health to be under new leadership.
3. Membership does not require that you currently believe everything that leadership believes. Membership means that you are willing to sit under the teaching and direction of the elders. You are, in other words, willing to learn and be directed according to the dictates of God's Word. The goal is that each person is prepared for works of service which build up the body of Christ. (Acts 17:11; Eph. 4:11-16)
4. The only compulsion a member ought to feel is the compulsion from God's Word. If you don't understand why you ought to do, or not do, something, then the leadership will patiently work through things until you do understand. Don't freak out if something doesn't sound right or fit with your preconceived notions - seek clarification and seek to understand. Members are expected to obey everything God has commanded. This means **learning** what God has commanded. Neither you nor your leadership understands this perfectly. You are submitting yourself to this leadership because you trust that they have a sufficient understanding and grasp of God's word and its proper application to lead you further on. Where God has clearly spoken, there will be authoritative instruction. (2 Tim. 4:1-4; Titus 2:15)
5. Godly leadership is fallible. That is why we are committed to the practice of **plurality of elders**. That is also why we have creeds that also bind us to the historic church. You are not to be held hostage to the whims of the pastor, rather he should faithfully lead you in the paths that godly men recognize. (Gal. 2:11 ff.)
6. If at some point you come to convictions which are at variance with the leadership of the church, you are expected to handle your convictions with wisdom and charity. If these convictions are of the kind that allows you to walk under the leadership of the church, and you can do so without disturbing the peace of the church (by trying to rally people to your view) then you are welcome to walk in peace with the church, providing your views are not heretical (heretical is defined as being out of accord with the substance of the historic Christian creeds, not

disagreeing with the pastor). If you believe that the church or leadership is involved in compromise and sin, and will not repent, then you must appeal to the presbytery to seek their help in bringing correction to the church, and leave it in their hands. If your concerns cannot be addressed in either of these ways, you may ask the leadership to transfer you to another faithful Christian church. Providing you are not trying to flee a disciplinary situation, the leadership will grant you your request.

7. The Church is much bigger than Holy Trinity Church. It is much bigger than the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches. It is much bigger than the Reformed churches. It is bigger than the Evangelical churches. It is even bigger than the Protestant church. This does not mean that all parts of the Church are equally faithful. Our goal at Holy Trinity is to strive for catholicity without dispensing with truth. This means patiently working through issues with other churches, seeking repentance, and striving for unity in the truth. It also means recognizing the difference between primary and secondary matters. This is why we pray for other local churches.
8. Worship stands at the very center of life. Nothing is more important, and all the issues of life proceed out of faithfulness or unfaithfulness here.
9. The church and the communion (CREC) have written constitutions so that everyone knows how we are to operate organizationally. The constitution of the church attempts to reflect Biblical teaching. Holy Trinity Church is not a democracy. Rather, it is ruled by elders. Holy Trinity Church lives in submission to the **other** elders in the CREC, respecting their wisdom and desiring their help and correction.
10. Faithfulness to God is worked out in obedience to Him in our relationships. The closer the relationship, the more important we learn to put God's Word into practice. Learning faithful family living is at the heart of our mandate. It is also why we take the qualification of leaders having faithful children seriously.
11. Memorials reflect the CREC's views on current issues, but do not have constitutional authority.
12. No education is religiously neutral, and giving our children a Christian education is an important part of faithful Christian living.
13. We believe that the church must be in total submission to God's word, and this means that we believe we must change as we grow to better understand it. The church is always in need of reformation.

## Holy Trinity Church Membership Vows

1. 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?

(I do.)

2. Have you been baptized in accordance with His Word?

(I have.)

3. Do you swear in the name of God, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to endeavor to live in a way that becomes followers of Christ?

(I do.)

4. Do you swear in the name of God to endeavor to support the ministry of this church in its worship and work, submitting to its government and discipline, while pursuing its purity and peace?

(I do.)

*(Are you speaking on behalf of your household?)*

To congregation: Please stand. You've heard these vows that were made. If you would like to receive \_\_\_\_ into the covenant community with you, please so signify by saying "Amen."

**Elder: Offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God.**