

## **By-Laws**

### Article 1      Authority

- 1.100 Trinity Fellowship Evangelical Free Church is a free and autonomous body claiming the right of free government and recognizes no religious authority or control other than Jesus Christ.
- 1.200 Trinity Fellowship Evangelical Free Church shall maintain a congregational form of governance in which the members also recognize the need for leaders and staff to take responsibility for policy and day-to-day decisions.
- 1.201 The members of Trinity Fellowship Evangelical Free Church, under the authority of the Lordship of Jesus Christ as head of the Church, have the authority to decide:
- a. the Doctrinal Statement;
  - b. the Constitution and Bylaws;
  - c. who will be accepted, and removed, as members;
  - d. who will serve as Elders;
  - e. who will serve as Senior Pastor;
  - f. who will screen potential leaders;
  - g. the financial obligations (level of indebtedness) of the church;
  - h. all matters not delegated to others.
- 1.202 The following values will guide the decision making processes:
- a. Authority to govern the affairs in the church rests with the congregation under the headship of Christ. The members of Trinity Fellowship Evangelical Free Church have the right to delegate authority to the congregationally-affirmed Elders and through those Elders authority is delegated to other leaders in proportion to their responsibilities.
  - b. The Elders, and other leaders affirmed by the Elders, are responsible to solicit input from and inform those who are affected by their decisions, while maintaining avenues of communication both to and from the congregation as a whole.
  - c. While the members give the Elders, and other leaders affirmed by the Elders, the freedom to lead, the members maintain the responsibility to assure that the decisions made by the Elders, and other leaders affirmed by the Elders, are consistent with the clear teaching of the Bible. Should intervention be necessary, the process shall follow the principles set forth in Matthew 18:15-17.

### Article II      Membership

#### 2.100 Requirements

- 2.101 As stated in Constitution Article 5.100 (being: “Membership of this church shall be composed of those individuals who, through saving faith in the Lord Christ, have been born again, who manifest the fruit of a true Christian life, who subscribe to the aforementioned Doctrinal Statement, who are willing to support the church by their prayers, contributions, and attendance.”)

2.102 Each member agrees to abide by the Constitution and Bylaws.

## 2.200 Classification of Members

2.201 Members: Members who have attained the age of sixteen (16) years shall be entitled to vote. Members eighteen (18) years of age and older are eligible to hold office.

2.202 Associate Members: Individuals may be eligible for Associate Membership who meet the qualifications for membership, and have just cause for retaining membership in another church of similar doctrine. (Revised 2-16-10)

2.203 Emeritus Members: Individuals who have attained the age of eighty (80) years shall be considered Emeritus Members and shall not be required to submit a recommitment form to be retained on the membership roll. Emeritus Members shall not be included in the number required for quorum, but may vote at any congregational meeting at which they are present.

## 2.300 Approval for Membership

2.301 Membership classes shall be conducted by the Elders, or other persons designated by the Elders, covering the history, doctrine, and practices of our church.

2.302 Upon completion of the classes, those desiring membership shall make a request to the Elders.

2.303 A minimum of two (2) Elders shall interview the candidate and shall agree as to the faith and life of the candidate, then make recommendation to the church at least two weeks prior to the business meeting at which the recommendation will be acted upon.

2.304 The members shall decide by a majority vote on the acceptance of all candidates for membership at a business meeting.

2.305 Former members who wish to reinstate their membership shall follow the process as outlined in Sections 2.303 and 2.304.

## 2.400 Transfer of Membership:

2.401 Members wishing to withdraw from this church to unite with another church may be granted, upon written request, a letter of recommendation from the Elders. Their names shall be removed from the church membership.

2.402 Transfer of membership to Trinity Fellowship from another church is not accepted. All persons wishing to become members shall follow the process in 2.300.

2.500 Recommitment of Membership: Members, including Associate Members, shall renew their commitment to God and to this local congregation annually by means of a signed covenant. Any member who fails to renew their commitment to this local congregation will be notified by the Elders and will be removed after two consecutive years of non-renewal, with notification given at a congregational meeting. (Revised 11/20/05)

## 2.600 Discipline

- 2.601 Members who err in conduct or promote doctrinal error shall be subject to discipline in accordance with scripture; Galatians 6:1,2; Matthew 18:15-18; et al. The member shall be dealt with according to II Timothy 4:2 and Ephesians 4:32. Every effort will be made to restore the member.
- 2.602 The member shall be dismissed only upon recommendation of the Oversight Elders and a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members at a business meeting. If the stricken member repents, and if possible, makes restitution, membership will be restored - II Corinthians 2:5-8.

## Article III      Organization

### 3.100 Congregational Business Meetings

- 3.101 The annual business meeting shall be held in November. (Revised 11/21/10)
- 3.102 The regular business meetings shall be held in April and August. (Revised 11/21/10)
- 3.103 An agenda listing items of business shall be publicized prior to the congregational meeting. (Revised 2/19/06)
- 3.104 Special business meetings shall be called by the Leadership Team as needed. Notice of special business meetings shall be given to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the date of the meeting.
- 3.105 At least one-fourth (1/4) of the total voting membership must be present to constitute a quorum.
- 3.106 Robert's Rules of Order shall be used as the guide for conducting business meetings.

### 3.200 Elders

- 3.201 Elders are men who meet the qualifications stated in I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; and I Peter 5:1-3.
- 3.202 The procedure for affirming someone to the office of Elder shall include:
- a. The review of the biblical qualifications for the position by the candidate seeking Eldership.
  - b. The candidate shall express either a sense of duty or call as a basis for seeking Eldership. The individual may receive encouragement from others to proceed with this step, but there will be no formal nominating committee.
  - c. The candidate will have an initial interview with the Screening Committee to review the biblical qualifications of the office and the individual's reasons for seeking the office of Elder.

d. The candidate's name shall then be presented to the congregation with the list of biblical qualifications for the office. Members of the congregation are encouraged to affirm or express concerns directly to the individual regarding the biblical qualifications. If issues are raised, the Screening Committee shall be responsible to explore these issues in depth with the candidate and the individual(s) raising the concern.

e. The candidate, after at least a two week period following step "d," will have another interview with the Screening Committee.

f. With the unanimous approval of the Screening Committee, each candidate shall be presented to the congregation for approval at any quarterly business meeting. This presentation shall occur in writing at least two weeks prior to the meeting. During this time, an individual with a concern should go and speak with the candidate. Again, if the concerns are not answered, they should be referred to the Screening Committee.

g. Of voting members present at the business meeting, a vote of 90% or more constitutes an affirmation that the candidate should hold the office of Elder. During the vote, which shall be by ballot, any member who votes against the affirmation without stating the biblical reason on the ballot shall have their ballot invalidated (i.e., the ballot will not count either as a negative vote or as part of the total number of votes cast). An easy to refer to list of the biblical qualifications shall be provided for reference throughout the entire process, including the balloting.

3.203 The term of service of Elder shall be three (3) years from the date of affirmation. An Elder may serve consecutive terms, following the screening and re-affirmation process.

3.204 The responsibilities of the Board of Elders include:

a. Devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word - Acts 6:4.

b. Protecting the flock from false doctrine - Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9.

c. Being vigilant over the souls of their congregation - Hebrews 13:17.

d. Helping the needy - Acts 20:35.

e. Praying for the healing of the sick - James 5:14.

f. Equipping the saints for ministry - Titus 1:9; Ephesians 4:11,12.

g. Leading by example - I Peter 5:3.

h. Exercising a general supervision over the affairs of the church - I Timothy 5:17; I Thessalonians 5:12; Acts 15:2,6,23.

i. Deciding who of the affirmed Elders shall serve as Oversight Elders.

### 3.300 Oversight Elders

- 3.301 Oversight Elders shall be appointed annually by majority vote of the full board of Elders. There is no minimum or maximum number of Oversight Elders; the target number is seven (7).
- 3.302 The term for an Oversight Elder shall begin in September and end the following August. An Oversight Elder may be reappointed to serve consecutive terms.
- 3.303 The Oversight Elders shall work by consensus, with decisions being unanimous. Any Oversight Elder who was absent from a meeting shall be polled and in agreement prior to the decision being acted upon.
- 3.304 The Oversight Elders, in addition to the general responsibilities of Elders (see Article 3.204), will be responsible to:
- a. decide the strategic direction of the church;
  - b. provide supervision for the Senior Pastor;
  - c. approve who will serve as Deacons, including paid Pastors/Deacons, and be responsible to dismiss paid Pastors/Deacons; (See Sections 3.700 and 3.800.)
  - d. approve the guiding policies of the ministry;
  - e. decide if a member should be brought to the congregation for disciplinary action.

### 3.400 Deacons

- 3.401 Deacons are men and women who have been granted the authority by the Oversight Elders in specific ministry areas to work with the Elders in implementation of ministry goals.
- 3.402 The qualifications for Deacons shall be patterned after those stated in I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6.
- 3.403 Following is the procedure for affirming someone as a Deacon:
- a. The need for someone to oversee a specific ministry area is determined by the Oversight Elders with input from the Leadership Team.
  - b. Candidates for Deacon may be recommended by the Oversight Elders and/or Leadership Team.
  - c. The candidate shall have an initial interview with the Screening Committee to review the biblical qualifications and the specific ministry description.
  - d. The candidate's name shall be presented to the congregation, along with the biblical qualifications and a description specific to the position being sought.

- e. Members of the congregation are encouraged to affirm or express concerns regarding the biblical qualifications or giftedness directly to the candidate.
- f. If concerns are raised, the Screening Committee shall be responsible to explore these issues in depth with the candidate and the individual(s) raising the concern, and may seek the counsel and involvement of the Oversight Elders.
- g. With the unanimous approval of the Screening Committee and the Oversight Elders, the candidate shall serve as Deacon, with notification given to the congregation.

#### 3.404 Term of Service

- a. The term of service of Deacon shall be at maximum three (3) years from the date of affirmation. A Deacon may serve consecutive terms, following the screening and re-affirmation process.
- b. Paid Deacons shall serve until their employment is terminated.

3.405 Deacons shall oversee their area of ministry, praying, planning, and implementing according to the needs of the body.

#### 3.500 Leadership Team

3.501 The Leadership Team shall be appointed by the Oversight Elders and consist of the highest level representatives of a) the congregation, e.g. Senior Pastor; b) the staff and ministry leadership, e.g. Senior Associate Pastor; c) our tangible assets of facilities, grounds and finances, e.g. Support Services Director; d) the Elders, e.g. Oversight Elder Chair; and ad hoc members as deemed appropriate by the Oversight Elders.

3.502 The Responsibilities of the Leadership Team shall include:

- a. Guide the implementation of the Oversight Elders' vision, strategic direction and guiding policies throughout the church organization.
- b. Allocate resources and develop written procedures for the use of resources, both financial and human, supporting the accomplishment of the vision and strategic direction.
- c. Provide timely cross-ministry or church-wide decision making as needed.
- d. Champion church-wide communications and promote ministry decision making to the lowest levels.
- e. Champion the development of the annual budget and adjustments as needed to be recommended for approval by the congregation.
- f. Call special business meetings as needed and prepare an agenda for each business meeting.

g. Make the following Annual Appointments and notify the congregation at the April Congregational Meeting:

Moderator to preside over Congregational meetings.

Clerk to take minutes at congregational meetings and maintain record of membership.

Treasurer to write checks and work closely with those who oversee the church finances.

Financial Recording Secretary to record contributions and prepare tax receipts. (Cannot be the same person as the Treasurer.)

President shall serve as the Leadership Team Chair and set the agenda for Leadership Team meetings.

Secretary shall be responsible to take minutes at Leadership Team meetings.

Director(s) shall be Deacon(s) who will be responsible to manage the church property, both real and personal, and shall represent the church in all of her legal matters. In the event that there are fewer than the minimum number of directors required by the State of Michigan, one or more elders will be appointed by the Oversight Elders to serve until additional deacons are affirmed.

(Revised 8-28-11)

### 3.600 Screening Committee

3.601 The Screening Committee shall consist of the Senior Pastor or his designee, two Elders, and three representatives from the members at-large. Not more than one at-large representative may be an affirmed Deacon.

3.602 Each at-large representative shall serve a three-year term. Terms of at-large members shall be staggered so that only one new member shall be added each year. An at-large representative may serve subsequent terms with a minimum of one (1) year between terms.

a. At the initiation of the three year terms, one representative shall serve a one year term, one representative shall serve a two year term and one shall serve a three year term.

3.603 Elders to serve on the Screening Committee shall be appointed annually by the Oversight Elders. Elders may serve no more than three (3) consecutive years, with a minimum of one (1) year before serving again.

3.604 At the April meeting, the congregation shall be given the opportunity to submit names of candidates for the at-large representative. Candidates shall be interviewed by the Screening Committee. Of those willing to serve, the Screening Committee shall recommend one at-large member, and an alternate, to be approved by the congregation at the August meeting.

(Revised 11-21-2010)

3.605 The at-large representative, and an alternate, shall be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the voting membership present.

3.606 In the event that a Screening Committee member is unable to complete a term, the approved alternate will complete that term. The alternate shall not be required to attend any Screening Committee meetings unless called upon to complete the term of a member who is no longer able to serve.

3.607 If during an at-large member's term, he/she decides to screen for a leadership position, the alternate shall serve for the remaining portion of the term, beginning with the meetings at which the at-large member is being screened. Should the at-large member not complete the screening process or not be affirmed in the leadership position, the at-large member shall be allowed to complete the term to which he/she was appointed.

(Added November 20, 2005)

3.608 Quorum for Screening Committee is two-thirds (2/3) of the members. The Screening Committee requires unanimous affirmation to present the name to the congregation. Any member who is absent for a vote shall be polled prior to the candidate's name being presented to the congregation.

(Renumbered November 20, 2005)

### 3.700 Search Committee

3.701 An ad hoc Search Committee shall be established for the purpose of searching for a candidate for an open pastoral position. The term of the Search Committee shall begin when a pastoral position is established and ends upon the filling of that position.

3.702 The Search Committee shall consist of three members appointed by the Oversight Elders, including the Senior Pastor or designee and two other members.

3.703 The Search Committee shall be responsible for the following:

- a. the collection and screening of resumes and letters of application,
- b. conduct of initial interviews,
- c. unanimous recommendation of the candidate to the Screening Committee.

### 3.800 Paid Staff

3.801 Upon recommendation from the Search Committee and affirmation by the Screening Committee, a candidate for the position of Senior Pastor shall be brought to the congregation for approval.

- a. A 90% affirmative vote is needed.
- b. The Senior Pastor shall serve until terminated by resignation, or by request of the congregation by a majority vote of those present at a meeting called for that purpose.

3.802 Paid Pastors, other than the Senior Pastor, shall be hired and dismissed by the Oversight Elders. New staff positions need to be included in the congregationally-approved forecast prior to hiring.

a. Process for dismissal of Pastoral Staff shall include:

1. notification given to the pastor by his supervisor indicating there is a problem that could result in termination of employment. They will develop a mutually agreed-upon plan for resolution, if appropriate.
2. notification of the person or group the next level above the supervisor.
3. an option of meeting with the Oversight Elders, the pastor, and the pastor's supervisor. The pastor may also choose to have the leaders within the ministry he oversees meet with the Oversight Elders.
4. a unanimous decision of the Oversight Elders to terminate employment of a pastor.

b. Dismissal of other staff members shall follow the same general procedure.

(3.802 a. and b. added November 20, 2005)

3.803 Approval of paid Pastor constitutes approval for church membership for the Pastor and his spouse.

3.804 Other paid staff members, including Deacons or support personnel, shall be hired and dismissed by the person or group who is responsible for supervising the position, upon the consultation of the person or group one level above the person or group supervising the position.

#### Article IV      Amendments

4.100 The By-laws may be amended or repealed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the voting membership present at any business meeting, provided notice of the proposal(s) to amend or repeal are given to the congregation in writing two (2) weeks prior to the meeting.

#### Amendments: