

CORNERSTONE
FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
MEMBER HANDBOOK

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Cornerstone Fellowship Church Member Handbook
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1 Introduction

When Christians get together to form a church there are a lot of *practical* matters to think through. None of these rival the most important ones of all—core doctrines like the Triune God and the gospel of Jesus Christ; or central commandments to love God, love one another, and love our neighbor. Yet, they are important, nonetheless. Some of these issues include questions like, *what does it mean to join a church, or how do we join this particular church? What does church discipline look like? Does our church have bylaws and articles of incorporation? What are elders and deacons at this church? What does it mean that this church is connected to Trinity Fellowship Churches?* This Member Handbook is meant to supply answers to many of these questions—not all, but many.

Matters contained in here are ones that don't quite fit into our other existing documents like *Exploring Membership* (given in our new members class), our Confession of Faith (though we include a copy of this below), certain policy documents (like our Child Protection Policy), *the Book of Church Order of Trinity Fellowship Churches*, and our booklet on baptism.¹ We refer to these titles in the *Member Handbook*, but you can look elsewhere to get the full documents.

*The elders of Cornerstone Fellowship Church
October 11, 2020*

¹ *Believe and Be Baptized*, available in our bookstore and at Amazon.com.

2 Our Vision

THE OVER-ARCHING PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

The over-arching purpose of our church is to glorify God. All that we do is to be done for that grand purpose. The church is to display the wisdom and glory of God to the visible and invisible universe (Ephesians 3:10; 1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Rom. 11:36), and the church's good works are to result in God being glorified (Matt. 5:16). The church is even called the dwelling place of God (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:20-22; cf. Rev. 21:3).

THE VISION OF CORNERSTONE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

Within this over-arching purpose are three core activities that represent the broad biblical responsibilities of the church: We love God through our worship and growth as disciples, love one another through our mutual service, edification, and concern, and we love our neighbors through our evangelism to the lost and our service to the needy.

Our first obligation is to love God through our worship and growth as disciples. To “worship God” (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17; Heb. 12:28-29; 1 Peter 4:10-11) means to proclaim his all-surpassing glory in all that we do individually and corporately as a church. While all of life is to be worship (Rom. 12:1), the high point of our worship is the corporate gathering we experience on Sunday mornings (1 Cor. 11:23-32; 14:26ff.). To “grow as disciples” means that we are growing in character (“fruit of the Spirit,” Gal. 5:22-23) and in our respective ministries (Eph. 4:12). This means first that we are committed to our own ongoing spiritual growth. We are pursuing God through Bible-reading and prayer, and we are putting sin to death (Rom. 6:1-5). This is a recognition that we belong to Christ and not ourselves (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Further, All Christians are endowed by God with specific gifts so that we might benefit others and serve others, and believers should be willing to be used in this way (1 Peter 4:9-10; Eph. 4:7-16; 1 Cor. 12:3-7; Rom. 12:3-8), first to those inside the church and then to those outside: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). The Bible makes it clear that because of the gifts we have received and the service we are to render, we are in fact involved in “the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12). The church is not be filled with ministers and non-ministers, because *all are ministers*. Instead, a church is made up of pastors and members who are all ministers in various ways. In fact, part of the essential role of elders is to “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (ibid.). In this way we hope to build an “every-member ministry” at Cornerstone Fellowship Church—a place where every member is fulfilling their God-given ministry.

Our second obligation is to “love another” through our mutual service, edification, and concern. Christians in the church are also to “love one another,” which means to live together in a vibrant local fellowship as brothers and sisters in Christ. Love is central to all that we do as Christians, and thus it is a critical part of our life together (1 Cor. 13:1-7; 1 John 4:7-12; etc.). We are not simply collaborators in a common cause or members of the same organization, but we are brothers and sisters adopted into the same family (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15; etc.). We are thus living a life marked by affection for one another (1 Peter 4:8), sacrifice for one another, sharing life’s trials and triumphs together, and living out the “one another’s” of the New Testament together. This fellowship also means that we build others up through our speech and actions as we have opportunity (Eph. 4:29; 1 Cor. 8:10; 10:23; 14:4; 1 Thess. 5:11; etc.). This is to be a goal for each of us as we live life together.

Our third obligation is to “love our neighbors.” Jesus taught us that loving our neighbors involves serving those in need around us (Luke 10:36-37). This is part of our calling to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19), because the greatest love we can express to our neighbors is to share the gospel with those who are not yet converted. This starts them on the journey of discipleship. Such disciple-making engages the whole local church since we are each gifted in different aspects of the task. Some of us are more gifted to love the lost in practical ways, others of us are more able to share our faith well. The key is that we are personally committed to this effort, whatever our part in the process might be.

Further, loving our neighbor as Jesus taught involves serving those in need. Our Christian life is to extend beyond the walls of the church itself and is also to be marked by good works toward the needy (Luke 10:25-37; Matt. 5:16; James 1:26-27; etc.). Most of these good works will be done in private and individual ways by Christians, but at times the church will facilitate larger efforts to provide for those who are needy in various ways.

3 Joining and Resigning Membership

To join Cornerstone Fellowship Church a person must be:

- (1) A believer;
- (2) Baptized in water as a believer;
- (3) An adult;
- (4) In general agreement with our *Confession of Faith*; and
- (5) Willing to support the values, mission, and policies of the church.

Here is a brief look at each of these five requirements:

(1) Membership is for Believers: Because God’s church consists of those who are born-again, it is appropriate for a local church to be limited to those who are born-again. We can see a clear picture of this in places like 1 Corinthians 1:2 where Paul greets the Corinthian church: “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2). While we cannot guarantee who is and who is not born-again, we can ask that all those who join Cornerstone Fellowship Church be able to give a sincere profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

(2) Membership is for those baptized in water as believers: In the New Testament, one of the key markers for a believer is that they are baptized in water by immersion. This does not *make* someone a believer, it only marks them as such. Jesus said to baptize “disciples” (Matt. 28:19), the clear pattern of Acts is to baptize those who make a profession of faith (8:12; 29-39), and elsewhere the meaning of baptism shows that this is appropriate only for believers (Rom. 6:1-5; 1 Peter 3:21). We make an exception for someone who has been sprinkled *as a believer*, but we would exhort even this person to consider whether he ought to be baptized by immersion.

This is because immersion best fulfills the meaning of the word in the Greek (which means to “dip into”), mirrors the pattern first shown by Jesus and then by all the apostles and ministers of the gospel in the New Testament, and captures the symbolism of places like Romans 6:1-4 (it has to do with death, burial and resurrection, not simply cleansing from sin). Requiring members to be baptized is really a truth related to number one, that a member must be a Christian.

(3) Adult Membership: Membership at Cornerstone Fellowship Church is for adults only. While we certainly believe that children can be converted and vital participants in the church (almost half of our church is under the age of 18), the responsibilities and service expected of members

imply that it is something best reserved for adulthood. As one example, a member is at times required to participate in the church discipline of another member. The wisdom and responsibility this entails mean that it is best if adults are the ones who perform such an action. Further, a child is still under the authority of their parents, and at times the interaction between the authority of the church and parental authority makes it challenging to treat a child as a typical member. For this reason, we regard the children of members as being members through the membership of their parents, but not as having their own independent membership. Once they graduate from high school and are at least seventeen years old, they are eligible for church membership.

(4) General Agreement with our Confession of Faith: To join Cornerstone Fellowship Church a person must also generally affirm our *Confession of Faith*. This is really just saying that to join our church a person must be a Christian. A Christian is someone who professes faith in specific things—what the Bible is, who God is, who Jesus is and what he accomplished in his birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension; who the Holy Spirit is; how a person becomes a Christian; what happens to us after we die; what the church is. These things are all implied when one professes saving faith in Jesus Christ.

The doctrine that is taught and defended in our sermons, classes, and writings will be broader than this and cover more specifics. These are things an elder must believe, but a typical church member isn't required to believe all that an elder believes and teaches just to join the church.

(5) Willingness to support the values, mission, and policies of Cornerstone Fellowship Church: A person who joins our church must also be willing to support the direction of the church as it is reflected in our values, mission, and policies.

Our mission is to *love God, love one another, and love our neighbor*. This captures the broad categories of our life together. To *love God* includes both our worship and our personal growth as disciples of Christ. To *love one another* includes our fellowship, mutual love, care, and service to our brothers and sisters in this church. To *love our neighbor* involves our service, mercy ministry, and evangelism to those outside the church.

Our church policies include those detailed in *The Book of Church Order of Trinity Fellowship Churches* as well as our church bylaws, our policy regarding the protection of children, our process of church discipline, and our understanding of pastoral confidentiality. We cover church discipline and confidentiality in chapter seven of our new members book (at least in part), and our child protection policies are located on our website.

EXPECTATIONS FOR MEMBERS

There are also expectations we have for members. The reason we list out these expectations is that we want you to see what a typical member does in our church. If any of them jumps out as offensive or strange, please talk to us. They might simply be new to you, and we would love to talk with you more about them. There are times when a difference of opinion on these issues becomes an important tipoff that our church isn't for you. Likewise, if you can see the biblical basis for these and are excited to be part of such a church, then maybe this is a sign we are indeed a church you should consider. Finally, one thing you'll notice about these expectations is that they are applications of what God commands.

There are five basic expectations for church members:

- (1) Regularly attend Sunday morning worship;
- (2) Actively participate in our home group ministry;
- (3) Serve on a ministry team;
- (4) Support the church financially; and
- (5) Submit to the leadership of the elders

(1) Regularly attend Sunday morning worship: The most important meeting of our church takes place as we gather corporately on Sunday mornings. We understand missing because of things like vacations, sickness, work conflicts, etc., but we expect that schedule- and situation-permitting, members will attend on Sundays. Hebrews 10:25 says not to neglect “to meet together,” and the most important meeting we have is the Sunday service.

(2) Actively participate in our home group ministry: We also expect members to regularly attend *home group meetings*, again schedule- and situation-permitting. Once a church hits a couple hundred people it becomes impossible to know, love, and serve *everyone*. So if we are going to live out the “one another” commands we mentioned, then we are going to need another context in which to do this. For us this is the goal of our home groups. These bi-weekly meetings take place in someone's home and are a key place for building relationships and living life together as the body of Christ.

(3) Serve on a ministry team: Members are also expected to serve on a *ministry team*, which are teams throughout the church dedicated to a particular area of ministry. Some are more visible like serving on the worship team, and some are less visible like those who serve as part of our Financial Advisory Board (deacons who help the elders with the financial management of the church). Yet, all of these are ways that we can take the gifts that God has given us and invest them into the growth of others.

(4) Support the church financially: We give our money as an act of worship, an expression of gratitude to God, to support church ministers, for the sake of the poor, and to support other churches nationally and internationally (Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:25-32; Malachi 3:10; Acts 2:45; 4:34-35; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8-9; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:10-19; 1 Tim. 5:3-16; etc.). When we give our money we are giving ourselves, and when we invest our finances in the church we are

investing our very heart in God's church (Matt. 6:21). We recommend that you prayerfully consider giving a tithe (a tenth) to the church as a starting point for your giving. Offerings can be given beyond this amount as God so leads you.

(5) Submit to the leadership of the elders: Another expectation is that church members submit to the elders. The New Testament says to "obey your leaders and submit to them" (Heb. 13:17). This is not a categorical submission like a child to a parent (so long as the parent is not asking the child to sin). This is a specific submission to the specific leadership of the elders. An elder's authority concerns a person's life in the church, not his life as a family member, citizen, worker, or in other contexts in which he might have other authorities. The teaching of the church might impact how we live in those contexts, but the elder's authority does not extend that far. There is a practical side to this as well like in matters of the church schedule, basic ministry structures, and the Sunday liturgy. In these practical areas of our church life we expect a basic responsiveness to the leadership of the elders. Further, there should be a basic receptivity to their teaching and input. The elders of a church are the God-given officers to teach and govern and protect the church (Acts 20:28f; 1 Tim. 5:17f.), so it is right to recognize their place in your life if you decide to join this church.

When someone does not fulfill one or more of these expectations, this can be a place for appeals by other members or the elders. Most of the time someone's inability to meet these expectations is because of a season-of-life change or a new schedule or some other practical consideration. We understand that we can't all hit these marks 100% of the time. Yet, there are occasions when someone's failure in these areas is a sign of a greater problem in their lives, and thus it can become necessary for others to get involved in a more serious manner.

PRACTICAL STEPS TO BECOME A MEMBER

The first step to become a member at Cornerstone Fellowship Church is to take our new members class. The point of this class is to give you a clear sense of what we believe and do as a church. It is a significant decision to join a church, and we want you to make an informed choice.

After the class, if you feel ready to take the next step, go ahead and fill out the Membership Questionnaire, which will help the pastor who does your interview know how best to use that time.

Once the class concludes, please set up a time for your pastoral interview. Contact one of our secretaries to do that. The point of this interview is for you to ask questions you didn't think about during the class, or which are personal and specific to you. This is also a chance to go over any material you missed or did not understand. The basic point of this interview is to help clarify if our church is the one God is calling you to join.

If you need to be baptized before you join the church, tell us, and we will choose a Sunday on which to do that.

In most instances, *a person is a member upon completion of their pastoral interview*. When baptism is required or other circumstances require, sometimes membership is delayed. At such times our desire is to serve the church and to serve you as you engage in this process.

The final step of membership is New Member Sunday, where you are introduced to the church along with the other new members. This weekend we also typically have a dinner so the new members can get to know the pastors and their wives in a less formal environment. We appreciate these events because it gives us a chance to express our gratitude for partnering with us in the cause of Christ, and it allows us to get to know you more.

RESIGNING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

To resign your membership from Cornerstone Fellowship Church you simply need to provide written notice to the elders that you would like to do so (along with the date that this becomes effective).

If you are willing, we would also appreciate that you meet with one of the pastors so that we can hear you out more personally. Sometimes people leave for reasons that are entirely practical (going to college, a job transfer, becoming part of a church plant, etc.), but sometimes their reasons have to do with ways we could grow in serving our people, and these interviews help us to strengthen our weaknesses and grow as a church.

An exit interview with one of the pastors can take the place of the written notice mentioned above.

Within 30 days after the effective date of your membership resignation we'll remove you from our church directory.

Also, though we trust this will never be relevant in your situation, resigning membership does not necessarily stop the church discipline process. Sometimes a person leaving still needs to be held to account for his actions after he has left our church.

RESIGNATION BY NON-PARTICIPATION

When someone persistently fails to meet the five expectations of members listed above and it is not for some practical limitation like work schedule or health or other temporary hindrance, then the elders may regard this as a “resignation by non-participation.” This means that though the person has not walked out the steps to formally resign their membership, he has resigned through his actions. Church membership is an active and ongoing partnership and a commitment to the “one another’s” of the Bible—love one another, serve one another, bear one another’s burdens (e.g., Rom. 12:9ff.)—so it doesn’t make sense to call someone a church member who is not active in that membership. In these cases the elders will not take this step quickly, but will likely make a series of appeals to establish the nature of the non-participation.

4 Our Confession of Faith

Elders at Cornerstone affirm *The Confession of Faith of Trinity Fellowship Churches*. This is the doctrine we believe to be biblical and is what we preach and teach and defend in the life of the church. *The Confession of Faith* affirms the Church's commitment to sound biblical doctrine and to the core beliefs to which it is committed. Christianity involves essential truths which are taught in Sacred Scripture, and are meant to embody our faith and guide our practice. These truths—which reveal the nature, character, work and promises of God in the gospel—form the foundation of our faith and the center of our fellowship.

The *Confession of Faith* of this Corporation is equivalent to the latest approved version of Trinity Fellowship Churches *Confession of Faith*. The first approved version is dated November 7, 2019. This *Confession of Faith* is derived from the 1689 London Baptist Confession but has been modified in numerous ways.

In summary, it is a *Confession of Faith* that affirm the inerrancy and inspiration of Sacred Scripture and is Reformed, Continuationist, Baptist, and Complementarian. It affirms governance in the church by elders (in plurality when possible), and a voluntary interdependence between the churches in the ways detailed in its *Book of Church Order*.

This *Confession of Faith* also affirms that gender is something physically embedded into each person and not a disposition a person chooses. Marriage is only between one man and one woman. Elders may not affirm views of gender contrary to this or perform wedding ceremonies for arrangements contrary to this. Other specific statements follow on certain matters.

5 Our Sunday Gathering

THE PRIORITY OF CORPORATE WORSHIP

We believe that the New Testament establishes the priority of corporate worship in the local church. We are not to neglect “to meet together, as is the habit of some,” but we are to be “encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:25). Further, throughout the New Testament we see by example (Acts 2:41ff.) and commandment (Heb. 10:25) that we are to meet together regularly as a local church. As Christians have practiced since the first century, we meet weekly on “the first day of the week” (1 Cor. 16:2), also called “the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10).

THE GOALS OF CORPORATE WORSHIP

During this time of “coming together” (1 Cor. 11:17; 14:26; etc.) we are primarily about the business of glorifying God (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

Yet, this goal includes within it the goal of “building up” our brothers and sisters in Christ. In fact, Paul says to “let all things [in the corporate meeting] be done for building up” (1 Cor. 14:26).

We also see the evangelization of the lost as one of the goals of our Sunday meeting (Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 2:22ff.). As the word is preached, praises are sung, and Christians demonstrate their faith, the gospel is being presented to the lost in our midst. We desire to see God’s Spirit bless this gospel proclamation with conversions.

THE ELEMENTS OF CORPORATE WORSHIP

The corporate worship of the local church contains many elements that are to be regularly a part of our services. These cannot be included in every service, but they are to be included on a regular basis.

The list of the elements of our corporate worship includes the following:

Reading, preaching, teaching, and hearing the Bible (Deut. 31:10-12; Neh. 8; 1 Tim. 4:11, 13; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; James 1:22-25). Because this is a primary activity throughout all eras of the people of God in the Bible, it must always remain a priority for Cornerstone Fellowship Church and its leaders.

Corporate and individual prayer (Neh. 9; Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 2:1-2, 8). Corporate and individual prayer is a hallmark of the corporate gatherings of the people of God throughout the Bible and should be a regular component of our gatherings as well. This includes formal liturgical prayers, pastoral prayers, corporate intercession, thanksgiving, and prayers of all kinds that occur in our meetings.

Singing, musical accompaniment, and physical expressions of worship (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:18-21; Col. 3:16; Psalms 47:1; 149:3; 150; etc.). God's people have always sung of his attributes and redemption (cf. Ex. 15; Rev. 5:9-10), and we desire for this to mark our weekly meeting with very few exceptions. Further, the Bible commands us to use instruments and includes a variety of physical expressions like clapping, dancing, raising our hands, and more to be a part of the praise of our great God.

Prophecy, tongues, and spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:26-30). The expectation of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is that our corporate gatherings would be times where the Holy Spirit manifests himself through various spiritual gifts. He also commands us to "earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1), and he creates the expectation that when we gather many would have contributions to make in the corporate meeting (1 Cor. 14:26). Elsewhere he says not to "quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). So, even as we pursue an appropriate order and spiritual discernment in our meetings (1 Cor. 14:26ff.; 1 Thess. 5:21-22), we want our meetings to be marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Collecting tithes and offerings for the ministry of the church, the poor, churches in need, and various aspects of our local and extra-local mission (Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:25-32; Malachi 3:10; Acts 2:45; 4:34-35; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8-9; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:10-19; 1 Tim. 5:3-16; Matt. 28:18-20). We worship God by giving our financial resources for his purposes. The work of ministry is to be funded by members giving sacrificially. The poor in our community and the needy in our church are to be ministered to by our giving. Gospel outreach is to be funded by local churches providing for ministers of the gospel to give themselves full-time to making disciples of all nations.

The Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-30; Matt. 26:17ff.; Mark 14:12ff. Luke 22:7ff.). Few corporate worship elements are highlighted in the New Testament, so the ones that are demand special recognition. The Lord's Supper is one of these. We celebrate the Lord's Supper with an open table (open to all believers) on a regular basis. We do this to remember the sacrifice of our Lord (Luke 22:19), to recognize our unity in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 11:29), to proclaim Christ's redemptive sacrifice and his return (1 Cor. 11:26), to participate in his death (1 Cor. 10:16-21), and to reflect on his presence among us and our inclusion in him (John 6:51; Romans 6:1-5).

Individual and corporate confessions of faith (Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 1 Tim. 3:16). In the context of baptisms we often hear public professions of faith. As part of our corporate worship we occasionally read historic creeds or other confessions of faith.

Baptism of believers (Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 16:29-33; Rom. 6:1-7). While it is not required that baptisms be practiced in the corporate meeting, we see it as edifying to do so. These are often events that involve someone in our families or network of relationships that has come to faith, so it is a church event in that sense. For this reason we include these on Sunday mornings when we can.

Ordinations of elders and deacons (Acts 6:1-7; 13:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). The ordination of various officers into their respective ministries at Cornerstone Fellowship Church happens in

the Sunday meeting. Deacons are ordained annually in September and elders are ordained as they are needed in the life of the church.

Expressions of fellowship such as personal greetings and the informal care that happens as we meet (Rom. 16:16; James 2:1-4; 1 Peter 5:14). Sunday meetings are not just a collection of activities that we perform, but it is the coming together of brothers and sisters in Christ that God has joined in the household of God. Therefore we see these gatherings as times to express affection toward one another, to greet others, and to minister to various needs as we are able to in the context of the weekly meeting.

How these activities are practiced will largely reflect Christian prudence and practical wisdom, but the goal is to see these clear, biblical practices represented in our meetings. Some of these are practiced virtually every week (preaching God's word, singing God's praises, prayer, giving financially). Others are practiced regularly (Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts). Others occur less often and typically as needed (baptisms, ordinations, confessions of faith).

6 Elders at Cornerstone Fellowship Church

INTRODUCTION

Because of the variety of approaches to the office of elder, it is important for us to clarify a few things about this role at Cornerstone Fellowship Church. In some churches the pastor is a virtual monarch, while in others he is little more than a spokesperson for a deacon board. Some churches place final authority in the hands of a regional bishop, but others see the congregation as having final authority for decisions and judgments. So what about Cornerstone Fellowship Church? How is our church governed? That's what we want to look at here.

WHO HAS THE AUTHORITY?

One important question when it comes to governing the church is, *who has the authority?* That is, in the final analysis, who really has the final say in a given decision? Historically, the church has given four answers to this question.

Some church traditions feel final authority rests with the *bishop*, a person in a given denomination who has authority over a number of other churches. This is called an *episcopal* form of government and is perhaps the oldest form. The Episcopal, Anglican, and Roman Catholic Church all adopt this church government. Local pastors have authority, but the bishop has a greater authority.

Other churches feel final authority is in the hands of the *congregation* itself, and historically they are called *congregational* churches. This authority is typically exercised through all-member votes. In these churches there are differences about which matters are voting matters and which ones are worked out through other means, but they all affirm that the congregation is the highest level of authority in the church. Baptist and Anabaptist churches of various kinds adopt this understanding.

A smaller segment of the church has said authority rests in the hands of *apostles*. Apostles in this government are not at all equated with the original Twelve or Paul, but would be similar to men like Timothy, Titus, and Silas in the Bible. There is some similarity with an episcopal government, but it is only a superficial likeness. The role of bishop and that of an apostle in this type of government are quite different. Some Charismatic and Pentecostal denominations adopt the office of apostle in this qualified sense.

The fourth type of government, and the one we affirm, sees the *elder* as having the primary place of authority within the church. Such churches are called *presbyterian* after the Greek word *presbuteros* for "elder" (cf. Acts 15:6).

This doesn't mean we are identical with traditional Presbyterian denominations. Those churches are generally cessationist, affirm the complete Westminster Confession of Faith, practice paedobaptism (baptizing infants instead of exclusively believers), and have a strong division between teaching and ruling elders. We are charismatic, affirm only parts (though large parts) of the Westminster Confession of Faith, practice credobaptism (the baptism of believers), and see all elders as having an equivalent office.

Our common ground with Presbyterians is our belief in a church government built around the office of elder. Because of its importance in our church and denomination we need to explain what we mean by "elder."

THE OFFICE OF ELDER

There are three terms the New Testament uses to describe the role of "elder." Sometimes people divide these into at least two different positions in the church, but they are really three ways of describing the same office.

An elder is most often called by that name, "elder" (Grk. *presbuteros*). Titus was told to "appoint elders in every town" (1:5) and is then given specific prerequisites for those elders (vv. 6-9). Paul and Barnabas "appointed elders...in every church" in their first missionary journey (Acts 14:23). The title "elder" speaks to the wisdom and character of the leader of God's church. It refers more to the caliber of the man than his precise age, though age can *sometimes* be a factor in whether to choose a man or not. The role was a critical one in the Old Testament, though it was never fully defined (Ex. 3:16; Jer. 26:17; 29:1; etc.).

Elders are also called by the name of "overseer" (Grk., *episkopos*). In fact, in Titus 1:5-9 where Titus is told to "appoint elders," Paul then says "an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach" (v. 7). Similarly in 1 Timothy 3:1, Paul uses the title "overseer" instead of "elder." This title speaks to the way an elder is to lead Christ's church. In fact, the Bible says they are to "rule well" (1 Tim. 5:17), and the church is to "submit to them" (Heb. 13:17).

Another title of great importance for the elder is that of "pastor" (Grk., *poimēn*). The word really means a "shepherd," something captured in the ESV in Ephesians 4:11: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers." A shepherd cares for, protects, feeds, knows, and provides for his sheep, and this accurately captures the kind of concerned leadership an elder is to provide in his church. Thus, the elders are commanded to "shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (NASB, Acts 20:28). We know these three titles and roles are synonymous from passages like Acts 20. In verse 17 Luke tells us that Paul "called the elders of the church to come to him, and then in verse 28 he exhorts them, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for [shepherd] the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." These elders are overseers who shepherd their flock. Thus, a pastor is an elder is an overseer.

Elders in the New Testament are given four basic responsibilities in the church. They are to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17), lead or rule (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-4), protect (Acts 20:28-31), and love (1 Peter 5:1-4) the church. As Paul makes very clear, the church does

not belong to the elders, though they exercise leadership in the church. The church belongs to God himself: “Care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). One point of confusion is to think that since elders are the official leaders in the church, they do most or even all of the ministry in the church. This is simply not true! In fact, God says a healthy church is filled with ministers. Notice in this passage how God gives gifted men for certain roles, but the point of these men is to equip others to do the ministry:

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13)

This vision of a healthy church body has captured our imagination and our ministry philosophy. It means that while elders are vital to a healthy church, they are by no means the primary workers in the ministry of that church. All are required if the body is to grow up to full maturity.

Now what kind of person is to be an elder? Can anyone sign up for this role? Not exactly. We learn from the New Testament an elder is to be a man of character, gifting, and leadership. That he is to be a man is affirmed in places like 1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-7; and Titus 1:5-9. The need for gifting and leadership flows out of what he does—teach, lead, protect, and love the church. The need for character we learn from two clear passages, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9:

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable,³ able to teach,³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim. 3:1-7)

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you--⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.⁷ For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain,⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5-9)

This is a sobering picture because it creates a number of ways a man will either not qualify for the office or can be removed from the office. Yet, here as in all things, we dare not be smarter than God. He has told us clearly what we are to look for in our elders, and we need to rest in his revelation.

ORDAINING ELDERS AT CORNERSTONE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

The ordination of elders at Cornerstone Fellowship Church happens according to the process detailed in *The Book of Church Order of the Trinity Fellowship Churches*. The process is designed to help a local church identify, evaluate, and train a man to serve as an elder. It involves the leadership of the local elders, the input of the congregation, and the evaluation and approval of TFC. Once a man is identified as an “elder candidate” he will begin a training regimen that is detailed in the current ordination standards of TFC. His character and gifting are examined primarily by the local elders. It is in the area of sound doctrine where TFC offers specific examinations, and they must also affirm that the man is not engaged in any scandalous sin. The congregation offers general and informal input about the elder candidate, and at a certain point in the process the elders will allow for more formal input. The congregation does not have the final voice of approval, but it is wise and helpful to get their perspective on a leader that will have such a significant role in their lives in the church. Once the candidate has completed the training program, passed his ordination exams, the congregation has given their input, and TFC has approved the candidate, then the man can be ordained on a Sunday morning at our church.

7 Deacons at Cornerstone Fellowship Church

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON DEACONS

The New Testament establishes the office of “deacon” by example (Acts 6:1-6) and implicit command (1 Tim. 3:8-13; Phil. 1:1). A deacon, as the name suggests, is a “servant” of the church, for the Greek *diakonos* means “one who is busy with something in a manner that is of assistance to someone.”² It can mean a somewhat official capacity, as when Paul refers to governing officials as “ministers” (Rom. 13:4), or it can be our general calling as servants of others (Matt. 20:26). If there is a question of whether the term is a demeaning one, this evaporates when we consider that Jesus himself is called a “deacon” in his redemptive work for Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 15:8-9).

Acts 6:1-6 records the appointing of the first deacons. These men were chosen to meet a specific need in the church, in this case feeding the Hellenist widows. The need in this case was circumstantial or occasional, and deacons in all churches need not be bound by this single ministry of care for the poor. The apostles made clear that they themselves were to be devoted to “prayer and to the ministry of the word” (6:2, 4). As the church becomes more developed it is not the apostles in the local church who are devoted to this ministry but the elders. Deacons thus come alongside the elders to enable this same devotion.

Deacons were to be men of exemplary character: “men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (6:3). These men were appointed to this ministry and apparently functioned with significant independence (v. 4). Last, it is important that the apostles defined the role for the deacons, though the deacons could apparently fulfill that role as they saw fit.

1 Timothy 3:8-13 fills out the character requirements of the deacon (and the deacon’s wife) even further:

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.¹¹ Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

Deacons are to be spiritual men, not simply chosen for their ability to manage practical details. They “hold the mystery of the church with a clear conscience” (1 Tim. 3:9), and they are “full of the Spirit” (Acts 6:3). This also implies that they can teach certain things in the life of the church,

² Bauer, Walter, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, eds. Danker, Arndt, Gingrich (3rd edition, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), *diakonos*. Hereafter called BDAG.

perhaps seminars and the informal teaching that happens as men lead discussions in small-group meetings. While this is a primary responsibility of the office of elder, it is a possible aspect of the diaconate.

The mention of “managing their children and their own households well” (1 Tim. 3:12) seems to imply that part of their service will be “managing” some aspect of church life. While elders “manage” the entire church (1 Tim. 3:5), deacons manage a portion of it, as the deacons in Acts 6 managed the specific aspect of feeding the Hellenist widows.

From these texts we conclude that deacons are (1) men of exemplary character, (2) who provide leadership in a part of the service of the church (in ways greater than the service all Christians are to provide in their local church), (3) exercise relative independence in fulfilling that role, and (4) serve under the leadership of the elders of a local church.

DIACONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AT CORNERSTONE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

Deacons at Cornerstone Fellowship Church fulfill the character requirements of 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6, and provide leadership in an area of service in the church.

The home group leader is a diaconal role at Cornerstone Fellowship Church, and they lead their respective home groups in carrying out the “one another” passages of the New Testament, those summarized at loving one another, serving one another, and building one another up (Rom. 12:9-21; 1 Cor. 12-14; 1 Thess. 5:11; 1 Peter 4:9-10). They are to facilitate this “one another” life of church members at Cornerstone Fellowship Church and incorporate unbelievers into this life as they are able.

Other diaconal roles at Cornerstone Fellowship Church vary according to the needs of the church, but they can include administrators in various ministry teams, assisting with managing the church finances (especially through the work of the Financial Advisory Board or FAB), or in carrying out certain mercy and outreach endeavors. The church administrator at Cornerstone Fellowship Church is also a diaconal position.

ORDAINING DEACONS AT CORNERSTONE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

Deacons at Cornerstone Fellowship Church are typically ordained in September for a period of one-year.

The church will be notified about a month prior to this with the names of the deacons for the coming year. Church members can respond in writing about the deacons being considered, and are encouraged to do so, especially when they question whether the deacon fulfills the requirements for character or gifting in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

It is expected that deacons will continue in their service past the initial one-year of service, but for practical reasons we will renew their office annually.

Here are the commitments that these deacons make when they are commissioned:

Gentlemen, at the end of the description of the commitments, you will answer, "I do."

A deacon must be a man of character. 1 Timothy 3:8-9 says that "deacons...must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience." 1 Timothy 3:12 says that a deacon must live a life of marital fidelity and manage his household well. Acts 6:3 says that a deacon must be both "full of the Spirit" and "full of wisdom."

Further, a deacon must fulfill his role with faithfulness. In Acts 6:1-7 the deacons were entrusted with the responsibility to serve the Hellenist widows in the distribution of food. It was a task they were to own responsibly. It was delegated to them, and they had responsibility to see it accomplished according to their own judgment and leadership.

Additionally, a deacon is called to serve the church for the glory of God. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says that we serve others with grace given to us so that "God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" and that "glory and dominion" are due to him "forever and ever."

Therefore, in light of the kind of man a deacon is to be and the dedication to his ministry that he is to model, do you now commit yourself to fulfill this task with faithfulness, integrity, diligence, and a reliance on God's grace and the Holy Spirit?

"I DO."

8 Pastoral Confidentiality

The pastors of Cornerstone Fellowship Church are committed to confidentiality in all matters where it is helpful to you and to us. In most counseling there is no need to share anything with others, but sometimes for your benefit we share selectively. A pastor might share with another pastor or his wife in order to get additional wisdom. At times we also share with the other pastors if there is a need for extra accountability in the counseling relationship (i.e., the pastors need to be accountable to the other pastors). The motivation for all of this is love expressed in a desire to serve you and the church as well as possible (Matt. 7:9; 22:39). See Section 9.7 in our Bylaws for more on this issue.

Related to this, certain situations require that a pastor report information to the authorities. North Carolina law states that if a person has “cause to suspect” that a child is the victim of abuse or neglect by an adult, or that they are a “dependent” (child without adequate adult supervision in the home), that person must report the situation to the county’s department of social services.³ The law is less explicit about reporting a crime against a child that is not abuse by an adult (e.g., a child-on-child situation).

It is not possible to write a policy that captures every contingency, but our desire is to involve the authorities as much and as quickly as seems warranted in a situation. The safety and welfare of our children is a concern that overrides a person’s privacy and our desire to preserve confidentiality. We recognize that our civil authorities are not perfect, but as obedient Christians we submit to their authority when it does not conflict with our obligation to God (Rom. 13:1-7; Acts 3:19; 5:29). We also recognize that we are often trying to balance the fact that our knowledge and wisdom are imperfect with the need to act as quickly as possible. These exceptions notwithstanding, our desire is to value the confidentiality that should exist between a pastor and a member of his church.

A final area where a pastor might share information is when it seems likely that the person will harm himself or someone else. This could include a person expressing that he has considered suicide. These areas are often grey with respect to the law, but our moral obligation binds us to act for the safety and well being of the person and others involved. At such times we see calling 9-1-1 (or another appropriate person or authority) as a way to serve and love people in need.

³ See the North Carolina General Statutes 7B-101 and 7B-301 to read the relevant sections of the state laws. Available at http://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_7B/GS_7B-301.html and http://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_7B/GS_7B-101.html on November 8, 2013.

As we said above, the motivation to act in these cases is Christian love. Though protecting privacy is often the path of love, there are times when seeking counsel or alerting the authorities is the more appropriate way to express a love for our neighbor.

9 Our Practice of Church Discipline ⁴

The word “discipline” has a variety of meanings in the text of the Bible. We are to “discipline” our children (Eph. 6:4). Paul says to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7, NASB). God himself “disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (Heb. 12:6; Prov. 3:11-12). In these passages the authors mean that some kind of negative pressure or consequence should be applied to someone so that he or she might become more holy. In fact, the goal of all discipline is holiness.

Thus, discipline refers to the correction brought when a person sins. This can be personal and direct as in the case of a parent and child. A parent will introduce discipline for a specific sin expressed by the child. But discipline can also be indirect and broad, something that theologians at times speak of as “formative discipline.” This happens through the teaching or discipleship ministry of the church. As an example, a person might hear a Sunday sermon that becomes a tool of God’s correction for him.⁵ Along these lines we even use the term “spiritual disciplines” to refer to personal Bible reading, prayer, fasting, and various other practices because these all have a kind of corrective or training effect in our life. They help us battle sin and train us in godliness—even as they serve in the very positive way of building our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Further, there are numerous ways that Christians are to appeal to other Christians in a corrective fashion with the result that we grow in holiness. The author of Hebrews warns us, “Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (3:12). This is a ministry that we exercise to “one another” and we do it “every day.” It isn’t a formal process, just the healthy give-and-take that is to occur in a church committed to holiness.

⁴ For more information on the discipline of both elders and members, please refer to the “Rules of Discipline” in the *Book of Church Order of the Trinity Fellowship Churches*. These sections describe various elements of charges against elders and how appeals by church members can be made. Helpful resources: Jay Adams, *Handbook of Church Discipline* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986); Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 145-156; “Guidelines for Formal Discipline” (obtained on March 4, 2014 at <http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/b.5474599/>); Jonathan Leeman, “A Church Discipline Primer,” obtained at <http://www.9marks.org/journal/church-discipline-primer#print-preview> on September 5, 2012 and *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); “Steps in the Institution of Judicial Process” (Book of Discipline, chap. III), *The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (2000); Mark Dever, *Guarding One Another: Church Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), pp. 167ff.; Robert K. Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride: A Handbook for Church Discipline* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, Ltd., 2012).

⁵ Leeman, 27.

Sometimes this brotherly ministry of appeal (and correction) even happens according to the general shape of Matthew 18:15-17, a passage that guides the process of formal church discipline detailed below. As we will see shortly, this passage begins by a personal appeal from one Christian to another. Then we take “one or two others” along to increase the pressure of that appeal. Finally we involve “the church,” which in this more common way means involving the elders of the church. Each time we only increase the pressure if there is a lack of response (no discernible repentance). And each time the goal is the same, the holiness of the offender.

Some authors call this “informal discipline” to distinguish it from an official process that can ultimately lead to excommunication.⁶ Most sins that Christians commit will be treated in this manner. They are serious and hurtful to us, but they aren’t serious enough to have us removed from the church and its fellowship.

All the above can loosely be called “church discipline,” because it is corrective in nature and occurs within the church. Yet, the phrase also refers to the *formal process* of appeal and rebuke that can ultimately result in excommunication. This formal process has historically been called “church discipline” and is likely what most people envision when they hear the phrase. The rest of this chapter will develop this aspect of church discipline and explain how it is to occur at Cornerstone Fellowship Church.

THE GOALS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

We need to start with a clear statement about the goals of church discipline lest we mistakenly assume that the intent is to shame or simply punish someone. In fact, the goal is not punishment at all. The goals of church discipline are fourfold.

(1) The first goal of church discipline is to bring a sinner to repentance. In the words of Matthew 18, the goal is to “gain your brother” (v. 15). Thus, the desire of the church in this process is the spiritual health of the offender and his true fullness of life in Christ. It is a rescue mission attempting to save the sinner from the clutches of his sin: “My brother, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20).

(2) The second goal is to protect the health, spiritual purity, relational harmony, and biblical faithfulness of Cornerstone Fellowship Church. Sin left unchecked can do great harm to a church. This is why the apostle Paul said, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). Further, we desire to be a people who are marked by the same holiness that we see in God himself: “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Rightly responding to sin is also a powerful encouragement for other believers in our church: people see the seriousness of sin and that we as a church take sin seriously, and both can be significant deterrents from sin that will protect and purify the other members of the church.

(3) The third goal of church discipline is to protect our witness to the world. Jesus told the apostles that “by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one

⁶ E.g., Jay E. Adams, *Handbook of Church Discipline*, 46ff.

another” (John 13:35). Our lifestyle (love in this case) demonstrates our discipleship. The way that we live communicates the God we serve. And what is true in how we love each other is true in our holiness as well. We reflect God to the lost world around us, and we want that reflection to be as close as possible to the real thing (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6-8).

(4) The fourth goal of church discipline is to glorify God. When we pursue biblical obedience, personal holiness, and corporate purity, we are not after creating a name for ourselves. We are desiring the glory of God: “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).⁷

As you can see from the above, punishing a sinner is not at all the goal with church discipline.

SINS WORTHY OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

One question to consider with church discipline is whether all sins are grounds for it. It is our conviction that not all sins are worthy of removing someone from the local church. We all commit sins routinely (1 John 1:8-10), and some of these we will struggle with until we are glorified. But most or all of these are not worthy of church discipline. We will all be proud, self-righteous, and angry at times, but this does not mean that church discipline is necessarily required.

In 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 we are given a list of sins that can lead to excommunication if someone persists in them:

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people--¹⁰ not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.¹¹ But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler-- not even to eat with such a one.¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?¹³ God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

Paul says we are “not to associate” with someone who calls himself a Christian and yet continues these practices. This gives us guidance about what constitutes a sin that would get us removed from a local church if we never repented: “sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler” (v. 11). These sins destroy the person and those around them, as well as their Christian testimony, and therefore necessitate church discipline if they continue without change or repentance.

Further, in Titus 3:10 another sin is identified that can rise to this level of offense: “As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him” (Titus 3:10). Paul does not duplicate the steps of Matthew 18:15-17, but the progression of “once and then twice,” followed by “have nothing more to do with him” seems to imply at least some progression. Perhaps the shortened process has to do with the serious harm a

⁷ These points were influenced by Mark Dever, *Guarding One Another: Church Discipline*, 15.

truly divisive person can do to a church. The critical point here is what is meant by “stirs up division.” Disagreement, even passionate disagreement, cannot be what is meant. Rather, it seems to picture some disagreement within the church that carries with it a rallying of others to support it as a faction. It is establishing a rival party to those in authority in the church. The reason for the strong response here is that such discord can profoundly damage a church. Throughout the New Testament this kind of divisiveness is condemned (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 11:18; Titus 1:10-16).

All this is to say, *sins that threaten the holiness or unity of the church in a significant way are places where (formal) church discipline can be appropriate.*⁸

THE PROCESS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

As in all areas of church discipline, the Bible and biblical wisdom inform the process. A central passage here is Matthew 18:15-17:

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

This process begins with a personal appeal and then progresses to excommunication if the offender does not repent of their sin. It is essential to see this as a *process* that unfolds over time and with patience and wisdom and justice preserved along the way. This process begins with a “one-on-one” appeal, progresses to include “one or two others,” and finally involves “the church.” Jesus does not detail a procedure in these few sentences, but he does establish a clear picture of a gradual and progressive intensity that only goes further if there is no repentance on the part of the sinner. In other words, true repentance stops the process, and a persistent unrepentance requires that the process continue.

We should say at the outset that some sins require immediate action on the part of the elders.⁹ For instance, we would not expect a case of alleged adultery to pass gradually from personal appeal to “one or two others,” etc. Rather, the elders would be involved immediately. Paul envisions this kind of action in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 where private appeals are bypassed and the church is to immediately “deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (v. 5):

⁸ Jonathan Leeman offers a helpful summary of when church discipline becomes appropriate: “Somewhere there is a line in between sins that you expect of Christians, and sins which make you think that someone may not be a Christian. Informal and private discipline occurs on both sides of the line, to be sure. But formal church discipline or excommunication is warranted, broadly speaking, when an individual crosses from the first domain to the second, from sins we expect to sins we don’t” (*Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 49).

⁹ Cf. Adams, *Handbook of Church Discipline*, 67.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.³ For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

In other words, he is to be removed from the fellowship (“Let him who has done this be removed from among you,” v. 2). In this case it has to do with the public and clearly sinful behavior of the man (cf. v. 1).

Titus 3:10-11 also envisions an abbreviated process as well, likely because there is a clear threat to the unity of the church:

As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

It would seem that these warnings—“once and then twice”—are coming from the church’s leadership, because Titus is written to a church leader himself, not the church-at-large. This also protects the process from becoming some version of vigilante justice. The reason for such swift and decisive action is the damage and destruction that disunity can bring to a church.

Even though the New Testament envisions times when immediate and strong action is required elders are still obligated to withhold judgment until the facts are known. Everyone is to be given due process before serious actions are taken. We must always allow that there can be mitigating factors that make the apparent sin less evil than we expect. This does not mean the elders should be timid or unnecessarily slow in their response, but only that as they enter into the situation they need to prioritize getting a clear picture of the details.

If church discipline is to occur in the normal manner and not an abbreviated one, then it is to proceed as follows:

STEP ONE: ONE-ON-ONE

The first step of church discipline actually occurs in an informal manner. Jesus simply says, “if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone” (Matt. 18:15). At this point we are still basically in the realm of the brotherly give-and-take we spoke about earlier. For that reason, to call it a “step” of church discipline is a little misleading. Yet, we place it here to make sure that this has happened before there is any further action. It would not be right for the elders or the “one or two others” to get involved before this private encounter has occurred.

The point of this meeting is for the one offended to clearly communicate what they believe the offender to have done. How exactly did “your brother sin against you”? That is the basic content of what is communicated. The offender should be given a chance to respond in case it is all a misunderstanding. The hope is that “he listens to you,” in which case the matter is dropped (Matt. 18:15). This means that the offender agrees with the appeal and repents (or that the offended party realizes his error and withdraws the accusation).

We should add here that the person offended in the situation may not necessarily deliver the private rebuke. There are a number of reasons why an advocate on behalf of the offended party might deliver the rebuke. If the sin is against a child or in some situations involving a man and a woman or there is something in the relationship that puts the two parties on unequal standing,¹⁰ then it might be prudent to have someone go along with the offended party to make sure that they are fairly heard.

Further, some matters have an additional civil dimension to them. If the alleged sin is actually a crime (domestic violence, child abuse, vandalism, stealing, etc.), then local authorities might be involved in addition to church members or the elders. It would be impossible to detail all procedures for all possibilities. For the sake of this document, we want simply to acknowledge this aspect of discipline cases. Most discipline will be a matter of church members only.

Getting back to our process, Jesus said, “if he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” If this happens the matter is dropped. Yet, “if he does not listen,” the process escalates to the next step (Matt. 18:16).

STEP TWO: ONE OR TWO OTHERS

If the offender does not respond appropriately, the process goes to step two. Matthew 18:16 says that if our brother does not respond to the private rebuke we are to “take one or two others along with you.” These should be men or women who are respected by both parties and the church as well (they may be called upon to give testimony to the elders). Jesus does not specify whether this person is a church officer (deacon or elder) or not, so we are free to involve whomever we think will be a wise, discerning, humble, and biblical support.

There are four basic roles these “one or two others” can fulfill:

First, they can be eyewitnesses who may have personally witnessed the sin committed. In this case they are not only appealing on behalf of the offended party, but they are appealing as brothers or sisters in Christ who desire to see a fellow Christian rescued from his sin.

Second, they may not have observed the sin but are convinced it did occur and is serious. Here they bring added godly pressure to bring the sinner to repentance. As in the case above, they are appealing as brothers and sisters in Christ, only this time they are not appealing as eyewitnesses.

¹⁰ As an example, if someone believes his much older pastor has sinned against him there might be a sense of intimidation in going to him to “tell him his fault” (Matt. 18:15). Perhaps there shouldn’t be, but in the event that there is, it would be wise for the offended party to ask an appropriate person for help (their home group leader, parent, older man in the church, etc.).

Third, they may play an investigative role. They may be coming to determine if the charge is indeed credible and what kind of response is thus demanded. This reminds us that in this step there should be opportunity for the offender to state clearly their side of the story and for the accuser to do the same. In the process of the conversation it is assumed that there will be sufficient clarity that the “one or two others” can make a decision about whether to rebuke the offender or to encourage the accuser to drop the matter and be reconciled with the other party.

Fourth, the “one or two others” help protect the integrity of the process. Their presence will add another set of eyes and ears to all that is happening, and this will help ensure that all follows a course that is both godly and consistent with this policy.

If it is clear that the offender has sinned against the accuser, then the goal is for the offender to repent of their sin and walk in the light. If there is not an appropriate response the process escalates again.

STEP THREE: TELL IT TO THE CHURCH ELDERS

[Note: Please note that if you feel the elders are acting wrongly or unjustly toward you in the process of church discipline as matters escalate, you can reach out and appeal to a member of the TFC Regional Judicial Review Committee. You can send an email to jrc@tfchurches.com, and they will respond about next steps in the appeal process]

After an offender has “refused to listen to” the “one or two others,” the next step is to “tell it to the church” (Matt. 18:17). This step has a fair amount of complexity to it because Jesus does not distinguish between the elders and the entire church. The obvious reason for this is that the church as an institution did not exist at this time. As an *ekklesia* (congregation of “called out ones”) it certainly did, but not as an organization overseen by elders. Thus, we need to approach this step with a certain amount of care and wisdom.

We are seeing in this “tell it to the church” step actually three separate actions, which are captured in STEPS 3-5: (1) STEP 3: The elders become directly and formally involved; (2) STEP 4: A hearing is held so that a formal judgment can be made; and (3) STEP 5: The congregation is informed and solicited to join in the increasing appeals to the offender.

Thinking of “tell it to the church” in this way helps (1) protect the dignity of the offender, for it allows for some investigation and appeal to happen without the entire church knowing the details; and it (2) captures the progressive nature of the discipline described in Matthew 18:15-20. Since one of the goals of church discipline is the repentance of the offender, this helps to create an environment that can facilitate that. Justice that is too swift can make it virtually impossible for the offender to have opportunity to repent. Of course, we are aware of the tension here, for justice that is too slow is often injustice and a failure to act appropriately in the face of clear sin.

Here we are concerned with the first of these actions, the formal involvement of the elders. Their role at this time is to make appeals to the offender and add to the pressure already being exerted by the offended party and the “one or two others” that have been added. If the sinner repents,

then the process stops here. But if, as before, these appeals are not heard and the offender remains unrepentant, then the process must further escalate to a formal hearing (see below).

STEP FOUR: THE HEARING

The point of a hearing is to establish the sin(s) committed, to let the offender defend himself, and to make another more formal appeal to the offender. All hearings of this kind must proceed according to the *Recommendations and Requirements for Discipline and Adjudications for Trinity Fellowship Churches for Adjudications for Trinity Fellowship Churches* (RRDA).

A general description of the trial is that three elders (likely from Cornerstone Fellowship Church but perhaps from TFC, depending on the situation) will serve as the Panel to hear the case. The trial will proceed according to typical trial formats with an opening by the elder presiding over the trial, a clear statement of the issues to be decided, opening statements by the plaintiff and defendant, the presentation of evidence (documents and personal testimony), and closing statements by the Moderator, plaintiff, and defendant.

Plaintiffs and defendants may have advisors to help them with the trial (as stipulated in the RRDA), and there are clear guidelines for how evidence is to be presented and how communication is to occur throughout the trial.

Within ten days the Panel shall render their judgment in the trial (also according to the RRDA). This judgment may have certain consequences attached to it, and this judgment may be appealed according to the BCO/RRDA. The elders of Cornerstone Fellowship Church can provide contact and process information for such appeals.

If the result of the hearing is that (1) the sins were in fact committed, (2) that they are in fact worthy of excommunication, and (3) that the offender remains unrepentant, then the process escalates to step five.

STEP FIVE: TELL IT TO THE CHURCH CONGREGATION

With this step we more literally “tell it to the church,” meaning the congregation. This could mean the entire congregation or it could be only a part. Wisdom will dictate which is the more appropriate in a given situation, but we expect that most situations will involve the entire congregation. The church may be told in a letter or a family meeting or through some other means. Enough information will be revealed so that the church members can make a meaningful appeal to the offender. This is the farthest thing from gossip where the goal is either entertainment at someone else’s expense or simply to hurt the reputation of another. Rather, the goal of informing the church about the offender and his sin is to rescue the sinner from the self-destructiveness of his sin and the damage it is causing to others (as well as the other goals mentioned above).

If the sinner refuses to respond to the appeals of the congregation and remains unrepentant, then the process escalates to the final step: excommunication.

STEP SIX: EXCOMMUNICATION

To excommunicate someone from the church is to treat them “as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:17). Here is another place where we need extra space to develop what we mean and do not mean. Here are seven key points about excommunication:

First, with excommunication the church and the elders here are not making a definitive statement that the offender is absolutely *not* a Christian. Rather, we are only saying that the behavior of the person is so contrary to that of a Christian that it is inappropriate to treat them as one. In this sense, it is more of a statement about their behavior than their salvation. Jesus said to treat them *as if* (Greek *hōsper*, “just as”) they were “a Gentile and a tax collector,” not to treat them this way *because they are* “a Gentile and a tax collector.” That difference is important.

Second, to treat a person “as a Gentile and a tax collector” means withholding the privileges of Cornerstone Fellowship Church that are reserved for Christians and/or members:

- They will be forbidden from taking the Lord’s Supper (an action reserved for believers).
- They will be removed from membership.
- They will be unable to serve on a ministry team.
- We will also attempt to evangelize this person in a loving and faithful manner. Their behavior so calls into question their faith in Christ that we assume they do not believe in Jesus. Therefore we will appeal to them to repent and turn to Christ. This might feel illogical or even unloving, but that has more to do with our sentimentality than biblical Christianity. Christian love “rejoices with the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6), even if it offends those we formerly called our brother or sister in Christ.

Third, to treat a person “as a Gentile and a tax collector” goes even further. It also means forbidding this person from attending all Cornerstone Fellowship Church events and meetings—Sunday services, home group meetings, and even hospitality with members of the church. Paul commanded the Corinthians not even “to associate¹¹ with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty” in the ways described in 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. This is a more than a statement of withholding *membership* privileges to such a one. It is a statement of forbidding any kind of Christian fellowship. We see this same idea in places like 1 Timothy 1:20, “Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” Also, 2 John 1:7-10 and Romans 16:

¹¹ From the Greek *sunanoamignumi*, “to associate with one another, normally involving spatial proximity and/or joint activity, and usually implying some kind of reciprocal relation or involvement” (Louw-Nida). C.K. Barrett seems to argue that the term means physical and complete removal: “be separated from the church body” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1968, 131-132). Thiselton defines the verb “do not associate with” as “do not mix indiscriminately with,” but over the course of his argument he seems to envision disassociating with the offender in all religious and social settings, though basic politeness that we extend to all on the streets and in the marketplaces, etc., we would still extend to this person. The point is not treating them as we would a fellow-believer *in any setting* (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC, 2000, 408-418). Gordon Fee writes that the man is to be “excluded from the *community* as it gathers for worship and instruction,” but he is unsure about whether this extends to individual social settings (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 1987, 226). John Calvin says on 1 Cor. 5:11 that “what Paul means is, that, in so far as it is in our power, we are to shun the society of those whom the Church has cut off from her communion” (*Commentary on 1 Corinthians*).

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.⁸ Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.⁹ Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, (2 John 1:7-10)

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.¹⁸ For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. (Rom. 16:17-18)

Fourth, this means that for the Christian, there are three categories of people, not two. First there are believers that we regard as brothers and sisters in Christ even if they are not members of our church. Second there are unbelievers that we evangelize as much as we are able. But third there are *so-called Christians* living in violation of serious and clear commandments in the Bible. In order to protect the church and the name of Christ, we must not extend to them our Christian fellowship and allow them to participate in the life of our church. We might relate to them publicly, but it is always with the intent of evangelizing them and urging them to repent of their sin.

Fifth, it must be clear that we are talking about serious and clear violations of the word of God. We are not looking at the idols of a person's heart or the motivations of a person's heart or tendencies toward pride that we all possess. We are looking at behaviors that are *serious breaches of biblical living and clearly observable to others*.¹²

¹² Here are five approaches to church discipline from different sources:

(1) Note the following statement from the Presbyterian Church of America *Book of Church Order* (obtained March 4, 2014 at <http://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/2013-BCO-Reprint-ALL-with-links-for-Web-site-12-20-2013-asn.pdf>):

Excommunication is to be administered according to one or other of the two modes laid down for indefinite suspension, or to be inflicted in public as the court may decide. In administering this censure the moderator of the Session shall make a statement of the several steps which have been taken with respect to the offending brother, and of the decision to cut him off from the communion of the church. He shall then show from Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 the authority of the church to cast out unworthy members, and shall explain the nature, use and consequences of this censure. He shall then administer the censure in the words following:

Whereas, _____, a member of this church has been by sufficient proof convicted of the sin of _____, and after much admonition and prayer, obstinately refuses to hear the Church, and has manifested no evidence of repentance: Therefore, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we, the Session of _____ church do pronounce him to be excluded from the Sacraments, and cut off from the fellowship of the Church.

Prayer shall then be made that by God's blessing this solemn action of the court may issue in the repentance and restoration of the offender, and in the establishment of all true believers (36-6, emphasis mine).

The PCA statement seems to imply that a member who is excommunicated will not participate in the life of the church in any formal or informal way.

Sixth, if a member is to be excommunicated, then the church will be informed either by written communication or at a members meeting. The communication will give enough detail to enable the church to properly call the offender to repentance. The communication will also make clear the restrictions placed upon the offender. That is, the elders will communicate what privileges and meetings will be forbidden to the offender. Last, the communication will convey the love we have for the offender and our desire to see him fully restored as a member of Cornerstone Fellowship Church (or at least a Christian in good standing).

Seventh, excommunication exists as long as the person remains unrepentant, but as soon as the person repents appropriately that excommunication can be lifted (see below). Such restoration is always the goal with church discipline, because the point of discipline is not to punish but to redeem.

THE NON-PARTICIPATION OF THE OFFENDER

If a church member stops participating in the church discipline process or attempts to resign their membership during the process, the elders reserve the right to continue the discipline process in their absence. The demand for integrity, justice, and the protection of God's name and God's church require that we continue this process even if the offender fails to participate. At such

(2) 9 Marks argues that excommunication means to treat someone like an unbeliever, but does not go so far as to exclude them from the fellowship of the church as 1 Corinthians 5 seems to argue (<http://www.9marks.org/journal/church-discipline-primer#print-preview>). Jonathan Leeman of 9 Marks says, "The general tenor of one's relationships with the discipline individual should markedly change. Interactions should not be characterized by casualness but by deliberate conversations about repentance. Certainly family members should continue to fulfill family obligations (see Eph. 6:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:8; 1 Pet. 3:1-2)" (*Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus*, 76).

(3) Acts 29, or at least Mars Hill Church, seems to adopt the position of Mark Driscoll that excommunication means to disassociate from someone, not merely to refuse the Lord's Supper or some other membership privilege (<http://marshill.com/2012/01/27/church-discipline-in-the-bible>, which cites his book, *Vintage Church* and the chapter entitled, "What is Church Discipline?").

(4) Jay Adams (*Handbook of Church Discipline*, 1986, 82-86) has an odd section in his book where he states that we are to remove the privileges of membership from the excommunicated member, but we are not forbidding them from attending worship services. Yet, in his reasoning he connects Paul's statement, "Purge the evil person from among you" (1 Cor. 5:13) to the places of Deuteronomy where an Israelite was to be removed from the community and stoned to death (Deut. 13:5; 17:7, 12; 21:21; 22:21-24). In other words, the Old Testament reference would seem to point toward a physical removal from the community of faith, not merely removing the privileges of membership. Adams has no more argumentation in this section.

(5) Robert Cheong wrote *God Redeeming His Bride: A Handbook for Church Discipline* (Christian Focus, 2012) for Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, KY. He defends the position that excommunication means removing a person from the community and mutual care of the church (cf. 139-155). This means that someone "removed from covenant community will no longer enjoy: (1) The relational support and accountability of friends from within the church; (2) The mutual benefit of serving others in the church; (3) The sense of community and identity associated with a group united in membership and purpose; (4) The mutually beneficial interactions in various contexts such as neighborhood functions, sporting events, workplace, and social gatherings; (5) The business arrangements that emerge from within the church circles. Members of the body of Christ will need to address such business-related agreements on a case-by-case basis and evaluate them using their Spirit-led consciences as a guide" (145). Even more explicitly he states that once someone is excluded "from community" they are also excluded "from church gatherings" (230).

times the elders will communicate with the church and with the offender as necessary, wise, and just.

THE RESTORATION OF THE OFFENDER

If the offender repents after the above process has occurred and expresses a desire to be restored to full church membership, he is to inform the elders of his desire. Restoration of the offender will involve his complete repentance and a verbal acknowledgment (in appropriate detail) of his sinfulness. It will also involve a statement of his forgiveness of sins¹³ by all appropriate parties and the elders themselves.¹⁴ If there are practical steps of restitution that need to take place (alienated spouses moving back in together, financial damages to be paid, etc.), these should, if at all possible, occur before restoration can be completed.

Of course, there are times when it is not possible for restitution to be made or for reconciliation to take place or for forgiveness to be granted by the offended party. At such times the elders will apply biblical wisdom to decide if sufficient repentance has taken place by the offender.

If the elders feel the offender is sincere and his repentance is credible, they will hold another hearing to formally restore him. The hearing will include the offender, the offended (as much as they are willing and able and it is seen as appropriate to the situation), and the elders of Cornerstone Fellowship Church. The elders will begin the meeting with a statement of the purpose for the meeting and a prayer for God's grace to be upon it. Then they will hear from the offender as he details his repentance. The offended will be in attendance to verify that the repentance has occurred (if appropriate). One to two others can be present with the offended and with the offender as they desire. These others are not to participate in the formal proceedings. They are present to provide counsel and support. They also serve as witnesses to the proceedings.

If the elders feel that the repentance is genuine, they can decide immediately to restore the person to full membership. If they feel it necessary, they may also postpone that decision for a period of time. During this time (no more than 90 days), they can give a set of reasonable assignments for the offender to demonstrate true repentance. The elders may also decide that the repentance is not genuine and reject it. The person will continue in their current state of excommunication if this is so.

If an offender is restored, the church and all relevant parties will be notified in the same manner as they were notified of the person's excommunication. If they were told at a members meeting, then another members meeting will be held to inform them of his restoration. If it was through a mailed letter, they will be informed by letter of his restoration. During this meeting or in the

¹³ Jay Adams, "Forgiveness is a promise in which one person goes on record as declaring he will never again bring up another's offense and hold it against him. The past as a debt is discharged; he is no longer held liable. His offense may be remembered only to help him to learn to act differently in the future. The offense will not be mentioned to him, or to others, and will not be the subject of brooding on the part of those who granted forgiveness" (*Handbook of Church Discipline*, 92-93).

¹⁴ The elders in this case are not saying the offender is forgiven for his sin against the elders, but that he is forgiven by Christ for the sins he committed against the offended party.

letter, the elders will describe the offender's repentance, their steps in restitution, the expression of forgiveness by those sinned against and the elders, and any practical guidance to the church in how to relate to the restored offender.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS REQUIRING AN ABBREVIATED PROCESS

As we said above, there are times when a process does not involve all six of the steps of Matthew 18:15-20. Sometimes we will shorten this process along the lines of 1 Corinthians 5 and Titus 3:10-11. This can occur if the sin of the individual is so obvious, hurtful, and divisive that the protection of the welfare of the church or certain individuals requires it. This does not mean that due process has been abandoned, only that it has been significantly shortened because the evidence is clear and the actions of the defendant risk causing significant harm to the church or individuals. In all such matters, we are balancing the rights of the individual and the justice that is due to them with the obligation to protect the name of God and to defend his church.

APPEALING THE DECISION OF THE ELDERS

Decisions in matters of church discipline can be appealed to the Regional Judicial Review Committee, as described in the BCO. The elders will assist the individual in getting this information if they are unable.

ALL DISCIPLINE HAS A REDEMPTIVE GOAL

As we contemplate the process above and especially as we envision the possible excommunication of a member of the church, it is important to remember that all discipline has a redemptive goal. The desire throughout such a process—even one that ends in excommunication—is that the person will wake up to the seriousness of their sin, turn to the forgiveness offered them at the cross of Christ, and commit to walking out repentance as it relates to this sin. The intent is never to punish, never to alienate, never to seek revenge. The goal is the restoration of the offender, whether it happens sooner or later. Excommunication is not an act of alienation, but it is an act meant to communicate the seriousness of the sin in question and the critical need of the offender to repent.

10 A Charge Against an Elder

One of the key texts with regard to bringing a charge against an elder is 1 Timothy 5:19-21:

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

This passage both provides a way to bring a charge against an elder and so protects congregations against the sins of elders, and it protects elders against frivolous and sinfully motivated charges. When an elder is guilty of certain sins, it brings great harm on the church and the name of God. Therefore, in order to walk in integrity before God we must provide a clear way whereby church members can bring an accusation against an elder.

Our denomination's *Book of Church Order* details the principles and practices for bringing charges against elders. The first step at Cornerstone Fellowship Church would be to bring it to the elder himself (if appropriate). Another approach is to bring it to one of the other elders since we have a plurality. If the charge has enough weight and seriousness to it, a trial will likely occur and the details for such a trial are contained in the BCO and in the RRDA.

Please know that our desire is to take seriously all legitimate charges against elders. There is great pressure on elders to be entreatable, humble, godly, just, and righteous in all such matters. If you ever feel that the elders of Cornerstone Fellowship Church are failing to act in this way, you can take it up with our denomination. We can give you information on who to contact in such matters.

11 Trinity Fellowship Churches

What exactly is *Trinity Fellowship Churches*? There are a lot of ways to answer this question, but *The Book of Church Order of the Trinity Fellowship Churches* opens with the following:

Trinity Fellowship Churches is an ecclesiastical union of confessional, connectional, and missional congregations committed to maturing and multiplying disciples with the gospel of Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

This means that though we are multiple churches (right now just a dozen or so), we are actually one “body” that is united on the basis of our doctrine and mission. It is a way to give true expression to the fact that all true churches are part of the one and only “body of Christ” with Christ as our head (Eph. 1:22-23).

TFC can also be called a “family of churches,” a phrase we use to capture our relational and organic connection. We are not a mere organization or association which is contractually united together.

A more common term for our union is simply a *denomination*. Though we are much smaller than denominations like the Southern Baptist Convention or the Presbyterian Church of America, we are a denomination because we are a distinctive group of churches that are united around certain values, doctrine, principles, and practices.

We believe our connection to other churches protects us from straying from our Lord Jesus Christ, and propels in accomplishing the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20)—a mission we simply cannot accomplish alone.

12 Cornerstone Fellowship Church Bylaws¹⁵

Adopted May 15, 2020

12.1 GENERAL

12.1.1 Incorporation of Local Church

Cornerstone Fellowship Church of Apex (the “Church”) is an ecclesiastical body established by Jesus Christ in Apex, North Carolina, to preach the gospel, disciple the nations, and establish a community of Christian believers and disciples of Jesus Christ. The Church is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation in North Carolina (the “Corporation”) to conduct its business affairs by, among other things, leasing and/or owning and maintaining place(s) of worship; receiving, holding, and disbursing gifts, bequests and funds; ordaining and licensing ministers of the gospel for civil purposes, and otherwise organizing and operating itself exclusively for the nonprofit, religious, educational, and charitable purposes stated in the Articles of Incorporation.

12.1.2 Autonomy of Local Church and Collaboration with Other Churches

The Church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs and own its own property and other assets. Recognizing, however, the benefits of collaboration with other churches, the Church participates in an association of churches called Trinity Fellowship Churches, in accordance with *The Book of Church Order of Trinity Fellowship Churches* (hereafter called *The Book of Church Order*)¹⁶ and its *Partnership Agreement*. As stipulated in said agreement, this association involves no legal transfer to, or sharing of properties with Trinity Fellowship Churches, but is a collaboration that advances a shared mission and facilitates interdependent church fellowship.

¹⁵ The current bylaws state in article 9 that, “These bylaws may be altered, amended, or repealed and new bylaws may be adopted at any regular or special meetings of the board.” Also, NC Guide for Nonprofits simply states the following vis-à-vis bylaws: “In both membership and non-member corporations, a set of rules known as the bylaws governs the internal administration and regulation of the affairs of the corporation. The bylaws may contain any provisions not inconsistent with the law or the Articles of Incorporation. The initial bylaws must be adopted by the incorporators or board of directors. A complete set of the bylaws, however, will not be filed with the N.C. Department of the Secretary of State. (N.C. Gen. Stat. §55A-2-06)” (See p. 15 of the document obtained at <http://www.secretary.state.nc.us/corporations/pdf/NonprofitCorporation.pdf>).

¹⁶ Documents such as *The Book of Church Order*, the *Partnership Agreement*, and related resources are available upon request.

12.1.3 Voluntary Partnership

The Church voluntarily partners with other local churches as described in the *Partnership Agreement*. These Bylaws are subject to the authority and precedent of *The Book of Church Order*; and they shall consist of the standards of doctrine, governance, discipline, and worship employed by this and other partnering churches. All references to *The Book of Church Order* herein shall be deemed to include any subsequent current amendments or restatements. The Church's participation in Trinity Fellowship Churches as defined by *The Book of Church Order* (including its judicial committees) is strictly voluntary and does not confer or transfer any of the Corporation's legal rights, privileges, assets, and liabilities to any of these distinct ecclesiastical bodies or any of their related or affiliated entities.

12.1.4 Responsibilities of Partnership

Responsibilities of and to Trinity Fellowship Churches shall be such as are summarized in the *Partnership Agreement* signed by all Trinity Fellowship Churches as found in *The Book of Church Order*.

12.1.5 Withdrawal from Partnership

Should the Board of Elders determine that for reasons of conscience the Church must withdraw from the Trinity Fellowship Churches association, it shall do so in full compliance with guidelines stipulated in *The Book of Church Order*, as agreed upon by the Church's Board in submission to the *Partnership Agreement*.

12.2 CONFESSION OF FAITH

12.2.1 Confession of Faith, Biblical Morality, and Godly Conduct

12.2.1.1 Confession of Faith

The Confession of Faith affirms the Church's commitment to sound biblical doctrine and to the core beliefs to which it is committed. Christianity involves essential truths which are taught in Sacred Scripture and are meant to embody our faith and guide our practice. These truths—which reveal the nature, character, work and promises of God in the gospel—form the foundation of our faith and the center of our fellowship.

The *Confession of Faith* of this Corporation is equivalent to the latest approved version of *Trinity Fellowship Churches Confession of Faith*. The first approved version is dated Nov 7, 2019. This *Confession of Faith* is derived from the 1689 London Baptist Confession but has been modified in numerous ways.

In summary, it is a *Confession of Faith* that affirm the inerrancy and inspiration of Sacred Scripture and is Reformed, Continuationist, Baptist, and Complementarian. It affirms governance in the church by elders (in plurality when possible) and a voluntary

interdependence between the churches in the ways detailed in its *Book of Church Order*.

12.2.1.2 Statement of Biblical Morality

The *Statement of Biblical Morality* expresses this Church's response to the changing legal and moral context in which it exists. It is a conscious application of the divine imperative that the Church "*not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our mind*" (Romans 12:1, 2). In an age in which specific biblical practices are being increasingly threatened by a rapidly deteriorating moral climate and assailed by an aggressively secular agenda, it is essential that the Church respond with clear conviction and steady voice. The Bible stands as our guide for faith and practice, not the changing values of the culture. To that end we affirm the following:

12.2.1.2.1 Church Discipline

The Scriptures call every Christian to a life of holiness, forbidding believers from habitual conformity to the sinful desires of the flesh or the ungodly patterns and behaviors of the world. Since sin clings so easily to the believer, Jesus, as Lord of the Church, has established means of accountability (commonly known as *church discipline*) within the local church, to guard the Christian from impenitent habitual sins. Such church discipline, which ranges from private admonition to public rebuke and/or removal from membership in the Church, is to be motivated by a shared desire for holy lives, a loving desire to lead others to repentance and restoration, and a zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ, our Lord.¹⁷ The Church practices church discipline according to the principles and practices outlined in the *Member Handbook*.

12.2.1.2.2 Sexuality and Gender Identity

We must ground our view of manhood and womanhood in the Sacred Scriptures. We affirm that God's creation of humankind included the creation of two distinct sexes—male and female—and that Adam and Eve demonstrate for us that gender has to do with biological differences given to individuals at conception. "Male and female" (Gen. 1:27) is thus not a feeling or preference or a decision that we make as people. However, because of sin and human brokenness, our subjective perception of our sex and gender is not

¹⁷ 1 Peter 2:11, 12; 4:1-3; Rom. 12:1, 2; Heb.12:1; Matt. 18:15-19; Rom. 16:17, 18; Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 12:20-13:10; 2 Thess. 3:6-12; 1 Tim. 5:19-22; Titus 3:10, 11; James 5:19, 20; 2 John 1:8-11; Rev. 2:20.

always that which God the Creator originally designed. We believe this is within the Lord's power to heal and correct, and yet until such restoration we trust in his grace to help us remain sexually pure in our desires and actions. Further, we look to him to progressively sanctify us through his Spirit and Word until our glorification.

In light of the above, the Church and its elders may not support or affirm a gender identity different from one's birth sex, or support attempts to change one's given biological birth sex through medical procedures. Further, the elders of Cornerstone Fellowship Church may not officiate same-sex marriages or unions, regardless of what the civil government allows or prescribes.¹⁸

12.2.1.2.3 Marriage and Gender Roles

A Biblical view of manhood and womanhood also includes a joyful commitment to marriage and family as taught in the Sacred Scriptures. The holy institution of marriage is to be the union of one man and one woman for life as established by God in Eden and is to point us to the relationship between Christ and his Church.

While men and women are equal before God as sharers of his image in creation and partakers of his grace in Christ, we believe that specific gender roles in marriage are God's normative law for the family. We believe in the servant-leadership role of men in both home and church and in the complementary role of women in supporting and submitting to that leadership. Therefore, it is sinful for a man to be domineering toward his wife, including verbal or physical abuse. It is also sinful for him to be passive or negligent with regard to his leadership. Likewise, the woman must not disrespect her husband, reject his authority, or be passive in her role as a wife.¹⁹

Furthermore, the Bible commands sexual chastity before marriage and lifelong fidelity in marriage. This is to be the abiding divine law for every Christian and

¹⁸ Some of the above comes from the *Employee Handbook of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Inc.* (50-51).

¹⁹ The position of this church is consistent with that articulated in *The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, by The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, www.cbmw.org

represents the teaching of this church. Sexual chastity includes abstinence from pre-marital sex, pornography, adultery, and homosexuality—i.e., any sexual activity outside of a one-man-one-woman covenant marriage.

While sexual sin is particularly serious before God, no sexual sin is beyond God's power to redeem and restore. We affirm the love of God for all who are guilty of sexual sin in any of its forms, and we offer the gospel and grace of God to all who will repent of such sins and turn in faith to Christ for their forgiveness and deliverance.²⁰

12.2.1.2.4 Divorce

It is God's intention that the covenant of marriage be a joyful union that endures for life. Those whom God has joined together must cleave as one flesh in faithful love and are not to be torn apart. Divorce is prohibited by God except when sexual infidelity and/or abandonment occur. When these occur, the offended spouse is free to divorce.

In cases of physical and/or severe mental abuse all reasonable steps should be taken to protect spouses. These steps might include separation, which is different from divorce. There can be times when *separation* is allowable and even recommended but where *divorce* is not a biblical option.²¹

12.2.1.2.5 The Sanctity of Life

The Scriptures teach that human life begins at conception, and that people are made uniquely in the image of God. This infuses sanctity into all human life from conception to death. This sacredness must afford to the unborn and to the infirmed of any age all the rights and protections granted to all other human beings. It is the duty of every Christian to speak for and defend such rights in every way he or she is able.

As a means of protecting the sanctity of innocent human life, Scripture allows for capital punishment (1) administered by the civil magistrate (2) through a just

²⁰ Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-25; 1 Cor. 11:2, 3; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18, 19; 1 Peter 3:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:9-15; Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:1-9; 1 Cor. 7:10-16; 14:34, 35; Mal. 2:14-16; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-20; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 5:1-13.

²¹ Gen. 2:18-25; Prov. 5:15-20; Mal. 2:14-16; Matt. 5:27-32; 19:1-9; 1 Cor. 7:10-16; Eph. 5:22-33.

process under strict guidelines (3) for those found guilty of capital crimes. Consistent with the value of human life which is made in God's image, all people should be treated with dignity.²²

12.2.1.2.6 Parental Discipline of Children

Children are a gift from God to be cherished and enjoyed with all affection and love. It is every parent's duty to delight in his or her children and to create a home of tender affection and love. The Holy Scriptures further mandate that parents train up their children to become responsible, mature, and Christian men and women. To this end the Bible commands parents to love, nourish, teach, train, and discipline their children.

While the Scriptures teach the corporal discipline of children, such discipline must be applied with great caution and tender care. Remembering that every child is made in the image of God, he or she must always be treated with respect and dignity. This precludes every form of wrathful, harmful, or injurious physical discipline, and requires that parents be loving, humble, cautious, and measured in the exercise of any corporal training.

The Church deplores child abuse in any and all of its forms and shall make every reasonable effort to ensure that parents understand and practice parental discipline with all due regard for the safety, well-being, and joy of every child. To do harm to a child is to incur the special displeasure of God.²³

12.2.2 Religious Practices of Corporation

To be consistent with the Church's religious mission, the Corporation shall not:

- 12.2.2.1 Establish any public or private policies or positions that conflict with the Confession of Faith;
- 12.2.2.2 Elect or appoint or retain any Board member who has not subscribed to and maintained agreement with the Confession of Faith. Any elder who drifts from agreement with the Confession of Faith is bound to alert the board to his disagreement;

²² Ps. 139:13-16; 51:5; Luke 1:41-44; Gen. 1:27; 9:6; Prov. 24:11, 12; 31:8, 9; Ps. 72:1-4; James 1:27; Gen. 9:6, Deut. 17:6, 7; 19:15-20; Leviticus 19:15, Rom. 13:1-4; Gen. 1:27.

²³ Ps. 127:3-5; 1 Thess. 2:7, 8; Matt. 19:13, 14; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 78:2-10; Prov. 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15; Heb.12:11; Matt. 18:2-5.

12.2.2.3 Hire or retain any employee whom the Board has determined is not a member of the Church in good standing.

12.3 OFFICES

12.3.1 Registered Office and Agent. The Corporation shall continuously maintain a registered office and registered agent within the state of North Carolina.

12.3.2 Principal Office. The principal office of the Corporation shall be located at 401 Upchurch St., Apex, NC, 27502, or such place as shall be determined by the Elder Board.

12.3.3 Additional Offices. The Corporation may also have offices at such other places as the Elder Board may from time to time determine and the business of the Corporation may require.

12.4 ELDER BOARD

12.4.1 Elders as Directors

All authority in the Church is derived from Jesus Christ and is exercised on His behalf. The primary governance structure in this local church is its eldership. The elders serve as the Corporation's Board of Directors, which shall exercise all such powers of the Corporation and do all such lawful acts and things that are not prohibited by statute, the Articles of Incorporation, or by these Bylaws. While ordination to eldership and appointment to the board are two separate appointments, all elders of a particular local church are to be appointed to the board and therefore the terms elder and board member are interchangeable. See *The Book of Church Order* for other important details on the nature, ministry, ordination, and discipline of elders.

12.4.2 Number

The Elder Board shall consist of not less than three (3) persons, as may be determined from time to time by resolution of the Elder Board. If the Church has only one elder, the Corporation shall appoint as directors at least two other elders from one or more local churches within Trinity Fellowship Churches. If the Church has only two elders, the Corporation shall appoint as director at least one other elder from a local church in Trinity Fellowship Churches. Directors shall be appointed by the Elder Board for terms as determined by the Board or until their successors are appointed and qualify in their stead.

12.4.3 Appointment

The initial Elder Board shall be as set forth in the Articles of Incorporation. Subsequent appointments of directors of the Corporation may be made by a three-fourths majority vote of those directors present at any regular meeting of the Elder Board, or at a special meeting convened for that purpose.

12.4.4 Vacancy

If the office of any director becomes vacant, the remaining directors, though less than a quorum, shall be authorized to select a successor who shall be appointed by

the Elder Board of the Corporation to serve the unexpired term of the vacated directorship.

12.4.5 Powers

The government of the Church is vested in its elders, who shall provide oversight in the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Church. The Elder Board shall exercise all such powers of the Corporation and do all such lawful acts and things that are not prohibited by statute, the Articles of Incorporation, or by these Bylaws.

12.4.6 Committees²⁴

Committees of the Board may be appointed by resolution passed by a majority of the whole Board, or by delegation of the Lead Pastor when he is authorized by the Board so to do. Committees shall be composed of two or more members of the Board and shall have such powers of the Board as may be expressly delegated to it by resolution of the Board of Elders, except with respect to:

12.4.6.1 The creation or filling of vacancies in the Board of Elders.

12.4.6.2 The adoption, amendment or repeal of the Bylaws.

12.4.6.3 The amendment or repeal of any resolution of the Board that by its terms is amendable or repealable only by the Board.

12.4.6.4 Action on matters committed by the Bylaws or a resolution of the Board of Elders exclusively to another committee of the Board.

12.4.6.5 The Board may designate one or more elder(s) as alternate members of any committee, who may replace any absent or disqualified member at any meeting of the committee. In the absence or disqualification of a member of a committee, the member or members thereof present at any meeting and not disqualified from voting, whether or not he or they constitute a quorum, may unanimously appoint another elder to act at the meeting in the place of any absent or disqualified member.

12.4.6.6 Each committee of the Board shall serve at the pleasure of the Board. The delegation of authority to any committee shall not operate to relieve the Board of Elders or any member of the Board from any responsibility imposed by law or Scripture. Rules governing procedures for meetings of any committee of the Board shall be established by the Board of Elders, or in the absence thereof, by the committee itself. All actions by any Board Committee shall be reported to the Board of Elders at the meeting next succeeding such action. The general functions of councils and committees are:

12.4.6.6.1 To bring considered recommendations to the Board concerning ministries.

12.4.6.6.2 To provide a wider base of counsel to the Elders having the oversight of specific ministries.

²⁴ This section is especially relevant when the number of elders in a church gets to such a size that much of the business of the elders (i.e., board) is done by various committees and not all the elders together.

12.4.6.6.3 To complete such duties and exercise such powers as are delegated to them by the Board.

12.4.6.6.4 All councils and committees shall exist for the period specified by the Board

12.4.7 Removal and Resignation

Any director who resigns or is removed as an elder in the Church (or another local church, if the Church has only one or two elders) shall automatically be removed as a director of the Corporation.

Any director may be removed from the Board with or without cause when, in the sole judgment and discretion of the Elder Board, it is determined by at least a two-thirds majority of the Board at a meeting duly called for that purpose and at which a quorum is present that such director should no longer serve on the Board; provided, however, that a notice, including the names of the director(s) proposed to be removed, and the date, time and place of any meeting called to consider such removal shall be given in writing to each of the directors at least seven (7) days prior to the date of such meeting.

12.4.7.1 Any elder may be removed from the board/eldership at any regular or special meeting of the Board if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated, or in the case of being found spiritually unqualified according to the procedural steps outlined in *The Book of Church Order* and the relevant policies of this Church (according to the Scriptures, including 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 as well as other texts describing mature Christian character; e.g. Galatians 5:18-24; 1 Corinthians 13), after a thorough corroborating investigation by the Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board, per Article VII, Section 18 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Board).

12.4.7.2 Should an elder confess to serious sin and agree to resign from his position, the resignation shall be handled according to policies and procedures outlined by Trinity Fellowship Churches (see the *Book of Church Order* and the *Recommendations and Requirements for Discipline and Adjudications for Trinity Fellowship Churches*).

12.4.7.3 Removal of an elder from the board may also occur for non-disciplinary reasons. Evaluation regarding the performance of a man in his office or the elimination of a role at the discretion of the Board may necessitate removal as well. In such instances great care should be exercised to decide such matters:

12.4.7.3.1 Only upon careful review and discussion.

12.4.7.3.2 By a super-majority of the Board.

12.4.7.3.3 With due consideration of the man's needs, family, and calling, as well as the church's needs. Pastoral care should be given to clarify to the congregation the reasons for the decision, so as to avoid any appearance of discipline that might reflect negatively upon the man or his reputation.

12.4.7.3.4 Removal of a man for non-disciplinary reasons does not revoke his ordination.

12.4.7.4 Whenever a man is removed from office for any reason, such actions should be taken with all care and gentleness, giving due regard to family, financial, and other

considerations. In such cases the man removed shall be informed of the possibilities of future restoration; and if such restoration is deemed possible, the process involved.

12.4.7.5 A director/elder may resign by delivering a written notice of intent to resign to the Board chair, which shall be effective upon its acceptance by the Board. Acceptance requires a majority vote by the Board at an official meeting (one where each director has had at least 7 days notice of the meeting and its agenda).

12.4.7.6 The elders reserve the right to dismiss the Lead Pastor in accordance with *The Book of Church Order*. The Lead Pastor must give thirty (30) days' notice if he intends to resign.

12.4.8 Accusations against an Elder

Full adjudication of the matter shall be completed in accord with procedures more fully outlined in Scripture, the Church's *Member Handbook*, and in *The Book of Church Order*.

12.4.9 Transactions with Interested Parties

A contract or other transaction between the Corporation and one or more of its directors, officers, or family members thereof (hereinafter "Interested Party"), or between the Corporation and any other entity of which entity one or more directors, officers, or elders are also Interested Parties, or in which entity an Interested Party has a material financial interest, shall be voidable at the sole election of the Corporation unless all of the following provisions are satisfied:

12.4.9.1 The transaction was fair and reasonable as to the Corporation or was reasonably determined to be in furtherance of its exempt purposes at the time the Corporation entered into the transaction.

12.4.9.2 Prior to consummating the transaction, or any part, the Elder Board authorized or approved the transaction, in good faith, by a vote of a majority of the directors then in office, without counting the vote of the interested director or directors, and with full knowledge of the material facts concerning the transaction and the Interested Parties' interest in the transaction, even though the disinterested directors are less than a quorum.

12.4.9.3 The Corporation entered into the transaction to advance its corporate purposes and not primarily for the personal benefit of any other party or other entity.

12.4.9.4 Prior to authorizing or approving the transaction, the disinterested members of the Elder Board, in good faith and with ordinary care, determined, after reasonable investigation and consideration, that either the Corporation could not have obtained a more advantageous arrangement, with reasonable effort under the circumstances, or the transaction was in furtherance of the Corporation's tax-exempt purposes.

Common or interested directors may be counted in determining the presence of a quorum at a meeting of the Elder Board (or a committee thereof) that authorizes, approves, or ratifies such contract or transaction.

Notwithstanding the above, no loan shall be made by the Corporation to any of its directors or officers, as provided further in Section 10.6 of these Bylaws.

12.4.10 Conflicts of Interest Policy

It is the policy of the Corporation to avoid conflicts of interest and to provide for full disclosure of any and all material conflicting interests by Board members, officers, senior management, and employees. The Board should be equipped to gather all relevant facts and circumstances to determine in accordance with the guidelines of Section 4.9 above, whether or not any disclosed potential conflict is benign and not in any way jeopardizing the religious mission, exempt function, or reputation of Christ's church, so that the contemplated transaction may be authorized as just, fair, and reasonable to the Corporation. This policy will be implemented by appropriate practices and / or written procedures adopted by the Elder Board.

12.4.11 Fees and Compensation

Elders are not required to be paid for their services as elders, but the Elder Board may choose for them to be paid for their labors. Fixed salaries may be determined through:

- 12.4.11.1 The extent and nature of the elder's work;
- 12.4.11.2 Any salary recommendations of our Trinity Fellowship Churches family of churches;
- 12.4.11.3 The recommendations of the Financial Advisory Board (a group of no less than 3 deacons appointed by the elders to provide counsel and expertise on financial matters within Cornerstone Fellowship Church).

12.4.12 Royalties and Honoraria

Refer to the church's employee policies for any relevant information about royalties and honoraria.

12.4.13 Resignation, Termination, and Severance

Should an elder desire to leave the employment of Cornerstone Fellowship Church, a four (4) week resignation notice is required. Those elders who choose to leave the employment of the church will be paid for earned, unused vacation days provided they give the required four (4) week notice. They will not be paid for unused sick days.

Standard severance pay for those who have been terminated by the church will be one week of pay for each full year of service with a minimum of two weeks and a maximum of twenty-five (25) weeks. In addition, the church will also normally pay for earned, unused vacation days. It should be stated that the Church does not participate in the unemployment insurance program with the state of North

Carolina and that unemployment income based on employment with Trinity Fellowship Churches will not be received.

In considering the amount of severance for termination, allowance may also be made for the facts and circumstances of each case as follows: length of service, age of the individual, the individual's position, the length of advance notice, circumstances of termination, condition of the local economy. The church is not required to consider these factors but may do so at its option.

In the case of resignation, the matter of severance shall be determined by the Board of Elders. In consideration of this the Elders are not obligated to but may choose to consider the factors cited in Article VII, Section 21, Paragraph 3. In addition, they may consider (1) precedent in similar cases, (2) the precise reason for and circumstances surrounding the resignation, (3) the present financial state of the congregation, (4) whatever other factors are deemed applicable to the situation at the discretion of the Board of Elders.

12.5 MEETINGS OF THE ELDER BOARD

12.5.1 Notice

Regular, annual, and special meetings of the Elder Board may be held within or outside of North Carolina without formal notice at such time and place as shall from time to time be determined by the Board, except for meetings at which the Board shall consider the removal of a director, as noted in 12.4.7.

12.5.2 Waiver of Notice

Whenever any notice is required to be given by statute, the Articles of Incorporation, or these Bylaws, a waiver thereof in writing signed by the person or persons entitled to the notice, whether before or after the time stated therein, shall be deemed equivalent thereto. Attendance at a meeting by a person entitled to notice shall constitute a waiver of proper notice of such meeting, except where attendance is for the express purpose of objecting to the transaction of business because the meeting is not lawfully called or convened.

12.5.3 Quorum

A majority of the directors shall be necessary and sufficient to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and the act of a majority of the Board at a meeting duly called for that purpose and at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the Elder Board, except as may be otherwise specifically provided by statute, the Articles of Incorporation, or these Bylaws.

12.5.4 Action Without a Meeting

Any action required or permitted to be taken at a meeting of the Elder Board or by a committee thereof may be taken without a meeting, by written action authorized by all the Directors. However, a written consent setting forth the action so taken and authorized and dated by all the members of the Board or of a committee, as the case may be, must be filed with the minutes of proceedings of the Board or the

committee. The written action is effective when authorized and dated by the required number of Directors, unless a different effective time is provided in the written action. When written action is permitted to be taken by less than all Directors, all Directors must be notified promptly of its text and effective date. Failure to provide the notice does not invalidate the written action, but a Director who does not sign and date the written action is not liable for the action.

12.5.5 Participation by Alternate Means

Members of the Elder Board or of any committee designated thereby may participate in a meeting of such Board or committee by means of communications equipment by which all persons participating in the meeting can effectively interact with one another, if each individual entitled to participate in the meeting consents to the meeting being held by means of that system. Participation by such means shall constitute presence in person at such meeting. When such a meeting is conducted by means of a conference telephone or other means of remote communications, the minutes recording any action taken at such meeting shall also note who participated in person and who participated by alternative communications.

12.6 OFFICERS²⁵

12.6.1 Number and Positions

The officers of the Corporation shall be elected by the Elder Board. Except as otherwise provided, the officers may, but need not be elders of the Church. However, all officers must be members in good standing of the Church. The Board may appoint such other officers and agents as it shall deem necessary, who shall hold their offices for such terms and shall exercise such powers and perform such duties as shall be determined from time to time by the Board. In the event that the President is incapacitated, another regional elder could be appointed to serve in the transition.

12.6.2 Term of Office

²⁵ For the sake of this discussion, (1) directors (collectively as the Board of Directors) provide governance oversight, direction, stewardship of the vision and values, transactional authorization, and over all ensure adherence to the corporate purposes. Directors are typically volunteers who are not compensated for the service to the corporation; (2) The officers of the Board, like the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer serve the housekeeping functions of the Board, and also typically are volunteers (i.e., they are not paid specifically for their service on the Board); (3) The officers of the corporation, on the other hand, such as the president (in this case the Senior Pastor), the chief financial officer, or executive pastor, or business manager, etc., provide day-to-day management, implement the plans and actions of the Board, report to the Board of Directors, and typically are full-time or part-time employed by the corporation. Often the president (or in this case the Senior Pastor) may actually wear all three hats. In some corporations, the chairman and/or vice-chairman of the Board may be considered “officers.” To avoid confusion, a corporation may wish to distinguish between officers of the Board (e.g., chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer, secretary, etc.) and officers of the Corporation (e.g., president, vice-president, chief financial officer, chief operating officer, etc.). As will be evident in sections to follow, Trinity Fellowship Churches maintains these basic distinctions, but these bylaws should be consulted for a specific understanding of each of these roles and their responsibilities in Cornerstone Fellowship Church.

The Elder Board shall elect officers of the Corporation, who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board. Any officer elected or appointed by the Elder Board may be removed at any time by the affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority of the Board at a meeting duly called for that purpose and at which a quorum is present, whenever, in their judgment, the best interests of the Corporation will be served thereby. If the office of any officer becomes vacant for any reason, the vacancy shall be filled by a majority vote of the Elder Board. In case of the absence or disability of an officer of the Corporation, or in any other case that the Elder Board may deem sufficient reason therefore, a majority of the Board at a meeting duly called for that purpose and at which a quorum is present, may delegate for the time being any or all of the powers or duties of any officer to any other officer, elder, or any other person.

12.6.3 President

The President of the Board will typically be the “Lead” or “Senior” Pastor, but the Elders may decide to appoint a different pastor to this position. To be appointed as President, and to maintain that position, an individual must satisfy the criteria established for pastors, as set forth in Section 7.

12.6.3.1 Corporate service - He shall serve as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation, and he shall have stewardship responsibility for advancing the vision and mission of the Corporation and managing or overseeing the business of the Corporation consistent with the authority delegated and the resolutions promulgated by the Board.

12.6.3.1.1 He shall see that orders and resolutions of the Board are carried into effect, sign and deliver in the name of the Corporation deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other instruments pertaining to the business of the Corporation, except in cases in which the authority to sign and deliver is required by law to be exercised by another person or is expressly delegated by the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws or by the Board to another officer or agent of the Corporation.

12.6.3.1.2 He shall make reports to the Elder Board, and shall have such other rights, duties, and powers as are authorized by the Elder Board from time to time.

12.6.3.1.3 This corporate role of the Lead Pastor shall always be secondary and subservient to his primary role as the spiritual leader of the local church to establish the Church’s vision, mission, and priorities in accordance with the Bible, to lead the local church to be a gospel-centered reflection of Christ’s body, to extend the glory and kingdom of God in and through this local church.

12.6.3.2 Selection of the Lead (or Senior) Pastor

It is the responsibility of the Eldership of the Church to identify and commission each of its members to fulfill tasks and responsibilities as they see fit, including the Lead Pastor. However, because of the visibility that a Lead Pastor has, and because of the unique and important role in which he serves with respect to the congregation, choosing him should be done carefully.

12.6.3.3 Role of the Lead (or Senior) Pastor

The precise nature of the role of the Lead Pastor in the Church may vary depending on the needs and preferences of the eldership but generally involves:

- Providing doctrinal leadership through teaching
- Developing the eldership into a cohesive leadership team and working to make it effective and efficient
- Providing pastoral care for the eldership
- Facilitating decision-making by serving as Chairman of the Board of local elders or by ensuring that another elder is so tasked
- Acting as the normal spokesman for the elders

12.6.3.4 Accusation and Dismissal

Like with all elders, charges made against the Lead Pastor (and all pastors) shall be adjudicated in compliance with guidelines established by *The Book of Church Order*.

12.6.3.5 Duration of the Lead Pastor's Role

Like with all elders, the Lead Pastor shall continue in his role until such a time either that he resigns or he is disqualified from the role or is better suited for another role, or that another man is more strategically gifted for the role according to the careful and deliberate decision of the eldership. Such changes are made at the discretion of the eldership and according to any relevant policies of Trinity Fellowship Churches and Cornerstone Fellowship Church.

12.6.4 Vice President

A Vice President is not required, but he should be an elder if one is appointed.

12.6.5 The Secretary

12.6.5.1 The Secretary or an assistant Secretary shall attend all meetings of the Board and record all votes and the minutes of all proceedings in a book to be kept for that purpose.

12.6.5.2 He shall bear responsibility for maintaining records of and, when necessary, certifying proceedings of the Board.

12.6.5.3 He shall perform like duties for the standing committees when required.

12.6.5.4 The Secretary shall give, or cause to be given, such notice as is required of all meetings of the Elder Board.

12.6.5.5 He shall have such other rights, duties, and powers as are authorized by the Elder Board from time to time.

12.6.5.6 The Secretary shall keep in safe custody the seal of the Corporation and, when authorized by the Board, affix the same to any instrument requiring it, and when so affixed it shall be attested by the signature of the Secretary, or by the signature of the Treasurer or an assistant Secretary.

12.6.6 Assistant Secretaries

The assistant Secretaries in the order of their seniority shall, in the absence or disability of the Secretary, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the Secretary, and shall have such other rights, duties, and powers as are authorized by the Elder Board from time to time.

12.6.7 The Treasurer

12.6.7.1 The functions below are typically fulfilled by the Treasurer but may be delegated to others within the Elder Board or Church:

12.6.7.2 Deliver all funds and securities of the Corporation which may come into his hands to such bank or trust company as the directors shall designate as a depository, and shall keep full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements in books belonging to the Corporation;

12.6.7.3 Disburse the funds of the Corporation as may be ordered by the Board, taking proper vouchers for such disbursements;

12.6.7.4 Render to the Lead Pastor and the Elder Board, at the regular meetings of the Board or whenever they may require it, an account of all his transactions as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the Corporation;

12.6.7.5 Deposit money, drafts, and checks in the name of and to the credit of the Corporation in the banks and depositories designated by the Board;

12.6.7.6 Endorse for deposit notes, checks, and drafts received by the Corporation as ordered by the Board, making proper vouchers for the deposit.

12.6.7.7 Upon request, provide the Lead Pastor and the Board an account of the financial condition of the Corporation;

12.6.7.8 If required by the Elder Board, give the Corporation a bond in such sum and with such surety or sureties as shall be satisfactory to the Board for the faithful performance of the duties of his office, and for the restoration to the Corporation, in case of death, resignation, retirement or removal from office, of all books, papers, vouchers, money, and other property of whatever kind in possession or under the control of the Treasurer, belonging to the Corporation;

12.6.7.9 Shall also have such other rights, duties, and powers as are authorized by the Elder Board from time to time;

12.6.7.10 May delegate his responsibilities to other qualified members but retains overall responsibility for the discharge of the duties of his office.

12.6.8 Assistant Treasurers

The assistant Treasurers in the order of their seniority shall, in the absence or disability of the Treasurer, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the Treasurer, and shall have such other rights, duties, and powers as are authorized by the Elder Board from time to time.

12.7 ORDINATION, LICENSING, COMMISSIONING

12.7.1 Ordination

Ordination refers to the recognition by the Board of Elders of a man's call to the ministry, preparation as a shepherd, and qualification to serve. Such ordination shall be conferred in accordance with procedures delineated in *The Book of Church Order* (and the ordination standards of Trinity Fellowship Churches), and any relevant policies of Cornerstone Fellowship Church. Ordination within Trinity Fellowship Churches shall be conferred for life, and is transferable within his region, as stated in *The Book of Church Order*, so long as the man continues to manifest the qualifications of the office.

12.7.2 Licensing

A license may be issued by the Board of Elders and may be given in recognition of a man's service in a ministry. Its aim is to allow a man to perform the ecclesiastical duties and functions of the church at the discretion of the elders.²⁶ Licenses will be evaluated—and issued or renewed—periodically at the discretion of the Elders. Licenses are issued only to members of Cornerstone Fellowship Church.

12.7.3 Commissioning

When local-church certification is required for ministry where ordination would be unnecessary or inappropriate, a person may be commissioned by the Board of Elders to minister. This authorization continues as long as the opportunity to minister remains in effect and as long as the person maintains the qualifications for ministry.²⁷

12.7.4 Appeals of Decisions

As noted in *The Book of Church Order*, the Church's decisions on the disqualification or discipline of elders and Church members may be appealed to the Regional Judicial Committee, and decisions of the Regional Judicial Committee may be appealed to the Court of Appeals. The Corporation shall accept and/or recognize the decisions of the Regional Judicial Committee and the Court of Appeals according to the stipulations and qualifications of *The Book of Church Order* and the *Partnership Agreement*, to the extent that they may affect matters of corporate governance (e.g., the fitness of an individual to serve as a director based on his qualification or disqualification as an elder).

12.8 ADVISORY GROUPS

²⁶ The United States Internal Revenue Service defines *ministers* as follows, "Ministers are individuals who are duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed by a religious body constituting a church or church denomination. Ministers have the authority to conduct religious worship, perform sacerdotal functions, and administer ordinances or sacraments according to the prescribed tenets and practices of that church or denomination. If a church or denomination ordains some ministers and licenses or commissions others, anyone licensed or commissioned must be able to perform substantially all the religious functions of an ordained minister to be treated as a minister for social security purposes" (IRS Pub. 517).

²⁷ For example, prison chaplains normally require a commissioning by a local church in support of their role.

The Elder Board may create one or more advisory groups, for such terms as deemed fit by the Elder Board. Such advisory groups shall have no vote or governance role but shall serve the Elder Board in the specified advisory capacity. The members of such advisory groups must be active Church members.

12.9 CHURCH MEMBERS

12.9.1 Membership Universal and Local

As a concept distinct from membership in the corporation, which refers to the Elder Board, the Church follows the New Testament concept of church membership: that each person regenerated by the Holy Spirit and responding in repentance and faith toward Jesus Christ is a unique and indispensable part of the organism which is Christ's body and all such persons are members of the universal body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:2). Membership in this Body of Christ is the grounds for fellowship between Christians. However, the Bible identifies local churches as those Christians in a locality who by the leadership of God and common agreement join together under recognized local leadership and governance for the purpose of worship, participating in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, instruction, mission, guarding the holiness of the church through church discipline, and fellowship. Christians are added as members of the Church according to the requirements and process outlined in the *Member Handbook*.

12.9.2 Church Polity Regarding Members

For more on Church Members vis-à-vis the polity of churches within TFC, see the relevant sections of *The Book of Church Order*.

12.9.3 Participation in Church Decisions

To the extent deemed appropriate by the Board, Church members may participate in key Church decisions, including a formal and public affirmation of elders and deacons, approving the annual budget, providing comments on proposed changes in the Bylaws, implementing major changes in the Church's ministries, and receiving new Church members; provided, however, that such participation is not binding, does not nullify the authority of the elders and/or directors to govern the Church or Corporation, and does not contradict *The Book of Church Order*.

12.9.4 Church Discipline

For the Church to remain under God's blessing and fulfill God's intentions, at times it may become necessary, formally and corporately, to confront sin or false doctrine in a Church member, including one who is serving as a Church elder.²⁸

The Corporation shall follow the rules prescribed in the *Member Handbook* and in

²⁸ Scriptural instruction and precedent for this practice appear in Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1-2; Acts 20:28ff; Gal. 2:11-14; 1 Tim. 5:20; Titus 3:10-11; Rom. 16:17; 2 Cor. 2:5-11.

The Book of Church Order for the adjudication of matters giving rise to possible church discipline and the administration of church discipline involving Church members, and the adjudication of charges against and the possible discipline of Church elders. The Corporation shall submit to the decisions of each ecclesiastical body that *The Book of Church Order* prescribes as having jurisdiction over the disciplinary matter at each stage of its adjudication. Unless the Board determines that it otherwise serves the best interest of the Corporation, any individual serving as a Director and/or officer of the Corporation who is the subject of any church disciplinary proceeding shall be required to take a leave of absence from active service. After the disciplinary process has concluded, the Board shall exercise discretion over whether it is appropriate for the individual to return to active service, to continue his leave of absence for a prescribed period of time, or to resign or be removed from his position.

12.9.5 Resignation of Membership

A Church member may resign from his Church membership by submitting a written communication to one or more of the elders at any time, which shall be effective upon formal acceptance by the Board (a personal meeting with a pastor may substitute for this written communication). However, if such resignation is an attempt to avoid the process of Church discipline, the Board will not accept the resignation until that process is completed to the satisfaction of the Board. Though generally such resignations by Church members not under discipline shall not be formally announced or published, such information is treated as public and available to any Church member or inquiring elder from another local church. See the *Member Handbook* for more on this issue.

A member may resign by non-participation in the life of the church. See the *Member Handbook* on this.

12.9.6 Removal from Roll

When a Church member resigns his Church membership or he is removed from Church membership due to unrepentant sin or doctrinal error, their name will be removed from the Church membership roll.

12.9.7 Confidentiality

Though every reasonable effort shall be made to protect confidential communications, especially those received in a pastoral counseling context, there will be times when to properly fulfill their spiritual and leadership responsibilities, the Church's elders may, as they deem necessary or appropriate, share confidential information with one another, Church members, civil authorities, or others they deem may be part of the solution or problem.²⁹ They may do this for the purpose of counsel or the purpose of protecting others from the effects of a

²⁹ Please note that this will likely erode the attorney-client privilege.

Church member's sin, or to assist one another in providing spiritual care to the people of the Church. See the *Member Handbook* for more on this issue.

12.9.8 Settlement of Disputes

In any dispute arising between church members and pastors or staff pertaining to any matter of spiritual teaching or practices, church finances, or title to property purchased with church contributions, the dispute *may be* resolved by the Board of Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board). In such cases, decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration, in a spirit of humility, with each non-conflicted/non-accused elder regarding one another before himself and striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3). Any elder(s) accused shall recuse himself/themselves from the final decision made.

12.9.8.1 Disputes between members of the church which cannot be resolved privately may be adjudicated by due process under the oversight of the Board of Elders in obedience to biblical principles of conflict mediation, arbitration and reconciliation, and in compliance with procedures delineated in *The Book of Church Order*.

12.9.8.2 In such cases every attempt shall be made to resolve conflicts via these means, except in such matters as involve criminal implications. In such cases legal due process may be mandated by civil law and shall be deemed permissible by the Elders, if not required. If no legal process is mandated, church members will be expected (unless, at the discretion of the Board, other recourse is judged permissible) to ask the church for mediation in all personal disputes including such matters as alleged breaches of contracts, sale of real or personal property, and/or loss of employment or employment discrimination.

12.10 SEAL

The Corporation may have a seal in the form determined by the Elder Board. Said seal may be used by causing it or a facsimile thereof to be impressed or affixed or otherwise reproduced, or by writing the word "SEAL" beside the signature of an authorized officer of the Corporation.

12.11 FISCAL MATTERS

12.11.1 Deposits

The Elder Board shall select banks, trust companies, or other depositories in which all funds of the Corporation not otherwise employed shall, from time to time, be deposited to the credit of the Corporation.

12.11.2 Checks

All checks or demands for money and notes of the Corporation shall be signed by such officer or officers or such other persons as the Elder Board may from time to time designate.

12.11.3 Fiscal Year

The Elder Board shall have the power to fix, and from time to time to change, the fiscal year of the Corporation. Unless otherwise fixed by the Board, the fiscal year shall commence on September 1st and shall terminate on August 31st.

12.11.4 Designated Contributions

The Corporation may accept any designated contribution, grant, bequest or devise provided it is consistent with the Corporation's (1) mission and spiritual priorities as determined from time to time by the Board, (2) budget process and fiscal restrictions, (3) full ownership and control of the funds or assets, and (4) tax-exempt purposes, as set forth in the Articles and these Bylaws. As so limited, donor-designated contributions will be accepted for special funds, purposes or uses, and such designations generally will be honored. The Corporation shall reserve all right, title and interest in and to, and control of such contributions, as well as full discretion as to the ultimate expenditure or distribution thereof in connection with any special fund, purpose or use.

12.11.5 Books and Records

The Corporation shall keep at its office correct and complete books and records of account, the complete copies of its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, the activities and transactions of the Corporation, minutes of the proceedings of the Elder Board and any committee of the Board, and a current list of the directors and officers of the Corporation and their residence addresses. Any of the books, minutes, and records of the Corporation may be in written form or in any other form capable of conversion into written form within a reasonable time.

12.11.6 Loans to Directors and Officers Prohibited³⁰

No loans shall be made by the Corporation to its directors or officers. Any director or officer who assents to or participates in the making of any such loan shall be liable to the Corporation for the amount of such loan until it is repaid. Nothing in this section shall bar any director or officer from receiving approved compensation in their employee capacities, or approved payments from the Corporation's benevolence fund in accordance with the policy and procedures governing such a fund, provided they do not participate in the decision to grant such benevolence.

12.11.7 Benevolence Fund

³⁰ This is considered a "best practice" for nonprofit tax-exempt organizations, and may be required under the laws of the particular jurisdiction in which the Church is located. However, if this practice is not prohibited by law, a church may decide not to prohibit such a practice if it is necessary to serve the best interests of its mission; for example, if it is located in a geographic region where the cost of living is particularly high, it may consider a loan in order to facilitate the transition of a new pastor. If a church is interested in reserving such an option, it should consult with legal counsel to determine or confirm whether it is permitted by law and consider any tax and other legal consequences.

Consistent with biblical teaching to share with those in need (e.g., Eph. 4:28; 1 John 3:17), the Corporation may establish a benevolence fund to meet material and financial needs of Church members and others. This fund shall be administered under a policy that sets forth the funds' purpose, procedures for administration, and objective criteria for selection of recipients for financial assistance.

12.11.8 Accounting and Fiduciary Guidelines

The directors and officers of the Corporation shall conduct their affairs with integrity in the sight of God and men and shall to that end maintain prudent and responsible control and accountability over all funds they receive and ensure that all funds are dedicated to the Corporation's tax-exempt purposes. Toward that end, the directors and officers shall implement practices, procedures, and / or policies that position the Corporation to be a model of faithful stewardship and quality internal accounting controls and procedures. In the case where elders from the regional assembly serve as directors of the corporation, they may appoint a financial audit and budget review committee of non-ordained individuals to serve locally.

12.12 INDEMNIFICATION³¹

Any person made or threatened to be made a party to any action or proceeding, whether civil or criminal, by reason of the fact that he, his testator or intestate, is or was a director, officer, employee, or agent of the Corporation, may be indemnified by the Corporation, and the Corporation may advance his related expenses, to the fullest extent permitted by law.³² The Corporation may purchase and maintain insurance to indemnify:

12.12.1 Itself for any obligation which it incurs as a result of the indemnification specified above; and

12.12.2 Its directors, officers, employees, and agents.

12.13 AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended, altered, or repealed by a majority of the Elder Board in attendance at any regular meeting of the Board, or at any special meeting of the Board if notice of the proposed alteration or repeal is contained in the notice of such meeting or notice is properly waived as outlined in 12.5.2 of these Bylaws.

³¹ Indemnification means "to protect (someone) by promising to pay for the cost of possible future damage, loss, or injury; to give (someone) money or another kind of payment for some damage, loss, or injury" (*Merriam-Webster*).

³² Although this provision provides for permissive indemnification, some states require indemnification in specific circumstances. Depending on the requirements of state law, a corporation may also establish a more precise standard for indemnification, such as permitting indemnification if the director, officer, employee, or agent has acted in good faith and in a manner reasonably believed to be in the best interests of the Corporation, and with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, in a manner in which he had reasonable cause to believe was lawful.

13 Articles of Incorporation

[Articles will be changed with the change of the church name in 2020]

State of North Carolina
Department of the Secretary of State
ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
NONPROFIT CORPORATION
Filed May 26, 1992 (Amended 2007)

We, the undersigned natural persons of the age of eighteen years or more, acting as incorporators for the purpose of creating a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of North Carolina contained in Chapter 55A of the General Statutes of North Carolina, entitled “Nonprofit Corporation Act,” and the several amendments thereto, do hereby set forth:

Article I

The name of the corporation is Cornerstone Fellowship Church, Incorporated.

Article II

The period of duration of the corporation shall be perpetual.

Article III

The purpose for which the corporation is organized is: To engage in any lawful act or activity for which non-profit corporations may be organized under the General Statutes of North Carolina.

Article IV

The Corporation shall have no members and the board of directors shall be elected or appointed as provided by the bylaws.

Article V

The street address and county of the registered office of the corporation is 401 Upchurch St., Apex, NC, 27511.

Article VI

The registered agent of the corporation is G. Philip Sasser.

Article VII

The board of directors shall be a minimum of 3, and the names and addresses of the persons who serve as directors are:

G. Philip Sasser	1207 Kingston Ridge Rd., Cary, NC, 27511
Daniel Baker	1332 Falkirk Ct., Cary, NC, 27511
Jim Martin	704 Cameron Glen Dr., Apex, NC, 27502
Mike Noel	8701 Marigold St., Raleigh, NC, 27603
Walt Briley	5916 Rounder Lane, Holly Springs, NC, 27540

14 Children's Ministry Policy

Please see our website for the latest Children's Ministry Policy. We see both the safety of our children and the discipleship of our children as a sacred trust from the Lord. Our CMP is a tangible reflection of that. To give you a taste of what this policy contains, here is how the document begins:

Ministry Mission Statement

Children are a gift from the Lord. The following goals guide our service:

1. To provide a safe environment where newborns through 6th graders are entrusted to carefully screened and qualified volunteers committed to serving families in the church.
2. To demonstrate and declare the gospel of Jesus Christ through structured, age-appropriate teaching, activities, and games that make learning and application memorable.
3. To help parents fulfill their responsibility to teach and train children in the ways of the Lord (Deut. 6:6-7).
4. To glorify God in all that we do (1 Cor. 10:31)

Our vision and beliefs for children, their parents, and our service are as follows:

- **We teach a curriculum that is God-centered.**
Our lessons are designed to exalt God – showing Him as great and Almighty. We study Scripture with the question, “*What does this say about God?*” We emphasize man’s sinfulness, his need for a Savior, and Christ’s redeeming work upon the cross.
- **We uphold the authority and supremacy of God’s Word.**
We teach solid Biblical truths that provide a firm foundation for life. We direct children to the Bible as the authoritative, infallible, and all-sufficient Word of God. We teach in an in-depth, yet child-friendly and interesting way.
- **We believe children learn most effectively when taught systematically.**
We teach Biblical truth on a simple level in the preschool years, reinforcing and expanding it at the primary levels. Truths are reintroduced as children grow, each time digging deeper and widening the scope of their understanding. We use materials designed to build sequentially, allowing children to learn in a systematic way.
- **We maintain that our ministry works to assist and support parents.**
We provide relevant biblical worship and instruction for children as a *support to*, rather than a *substitute for* parental involvement. We pray parents find our service an encouragement for their role of raising their children in the fear and the admonition of the Lord (Eph. 4:11-12).
- **We welcome all who can to serve in Children’s Ministry.**
God has provided the members of the church with many gifts as a way of building up the church body. We invite all eligible and qualified individuals to consider serving in Children’s Ministry as an

opportunity to put their gifts to work in ways that yield eternal fruit in the lives of young people they serve.