

Bylaws of the Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

December 10, 2023
Last Amended on May 19, 2024

Article I – Name

- 1) The name of this corporation shall be the Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut, Inc.

Article II – Purpose & Covenant

- 1) We covenant with the Triune Lord, and one with another, to worship our God, disciple each other in His ways, and outreach to this fallen world, all in accordance to God's Holy Word.

Article III – Statement of Faith

- 1) We believe in the biblical historic Reformed Congregational faith and give assent to the great creeds of the Ancient Church and our Reformed Heritage, including the **Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, Savoy Declaration, Cambridge Platform, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms.**
- 2) We strictly hold to such fundamental doctrines as:
 - a) **Trinity** - There is only one God who eternally and coequally exists in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - b) **Deity of Christ** – The Lord Jesus is the only eternally begotten Son of God, who is fully God, fully man, and without sin. He became incarnate, born of the virgin, was crucified, died and was buried; on the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
 - c) **Sovereignty of God** - God created, governs, upholds and ordains all things for His glory and the good of His people.
 - d) **Authority of Scripture** - The Bible alone is the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible written Word of God and sufficient for all matters of the faith and life.
 - e) **Sinfulness of Man** - Though made in the image of God, mankind is now fallen, dead in sin, and under God's wrath.
 - f) **Christ is Savior** - The only way to be justified before God is by Christ's imputed righteousness which is received by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone.
 - g) **Covenant of Grace** - Christians are no longer under the condemnation of the Law but walk by the Spirit in faith and are called to lives of holiness and good works out of thanksgiving.
 - h) **The Church** - Christ calls His people to discipleship and universal fellowship in His church, His spiritual body on earth, which is made up of local congregations.
 - i) **Ministry of the Word** - The public worship of God on the Lord's Day is essential, especially by the preaching of the Law and the Gospel, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper
 - j) **Sanctity of Marriage** - God has made mankind either male or female with marriage as a holy estate between only one man and one woman.
 - k) **Heaven & Hell** - Upon death, the wicked go to hell and the righteous in Christ go to heaven.
 - l) **Christ's Return** - The Lord Jesus will return at the end of the age to raise the dead, pass final judgment on all, and establish the eternal new heavens and new earth.

- 3) We acknowledge some things are hard to understand within Scripture and thus charity should be given within the boundaries of the broader Reformed Tradition, and also to those who simply love their Lord and desire fellowship in Christ's church and are willing to submit to this church's authority and purpose.

Article IV - The Congregation

- 1) **Duties** - All members are called to deny themselves and daily take up their cross and follow their King, the Lord Jesus Christ as He reveals Himself in Scripture by His Spirit.
- 2) **Requirements for Membership** - All those seeking membership shall:
 - a) Give testimony of repentance from sin, faith in Christ, and agree with the church's Statement of Faith and confess willingness to be governed by this church's bylaws to a representative of the elders.
 - b) Have received Christian baptism.
 - c) Promise to follow the Lord Jesus and be an active and supportive member of this church, which includes:
 - i) Regularly attending Lord's Day worship and partaking in the Lord's Supper if able.
 - ii) Live godly lives as prescribed by the Scriptures.
 - d) Attend a new membership class as prescribed by the elders.
 - e) Be of the minimum age for joining the church, which is 18, or have been confirmed by this church as prescribed by the elders.
- 3) New members shall be approved by the elders and presented to the congregation during a Sunday service to give public affirmation of their faith, unless there are extenuating circumstances allowed by the elders.
- 4) **Removal from Membership** - Members who request to leave this fellowship for lawful reasons shall receive a letter of blessing, thanks and acknowledgment from the elders if requested.
- 5) Members who flagrantly and unrepentantly fall into sin shall come under church discipline.
 - a) Reasons for church discipline include:
 - i) Gross public immorality as witnessed by direct violation of God's Law, in particular as outlined in the Ten Commandments as interpreted by the New Covenant.
 - ii) Publicly proclaiming heretical beliefs that are contrary to the Statement of Faith.
 - iii) Forsaking the fellowship as witnessed by not attending public worship for one year without good excuse.
 - b) The elders shall first patiently endeavor to secure the repentance of those who have broken covenant with this church.
 - c) Failing such efforts, the elders will recommend to the congregation that the unrepentant member be removed from membership and denied access to the Lord's Table.
 - d) Those under discipline will be given at least two weeks' notice of any such vote, whether by the elders or the congregation, and given the opportunity to speak.
 - e) Any person whose membership has been terminated may be restored by vote of the congregation upon evidence of his or her repentance, or satisfactory explanation, given to the elders.
- 6) **Congregational Authority** - The congregation, at a lawfully called meeting, has final authority on all matters.

- 7) The following decisions can only be made by the congregation at a lawfully called meeting:
- a) Hiring or firing the pastor.
 - b) Removal of a ruling elder or deacon from office.
 - c) Removal of a member from church membership.
 - d) Joining or leaving any organization, such as a denomination.
 - e) Amending or changing the bylaws.
 - f) Approval of the annual church budget.
 - g) Acquiring, disposing of, or changing in a major way any fixed asset of the church.
 - h) Dissolve the church as an organization.
- 8) **Congregational Meetings** – The date, time and nature of the business of all congregational meetings will be announced during Sunday worship on the two Sundays immediately preceding the meeting.
- a) Congregational meetings will be moderated by an elder chosen by the elder board.
 - b) All votes of the church (congregation, boards, etc.) require a 2/3 vote to pass.
 - c) Congregational meetings require a quorum of 20 percent of the membership.
 - d) The **annual meeting** shall be held at a time to be determined by the elders, for the purpose of receiving the yearly reports, for electing officers, transacting business, adopting the annual budget and setting up plans for the new year.
 - e) **Special meetings** may be called by the pastor, an elder, a majority vote of the Diaconate, or by the clerk on the written request of 10 members of the church. The nature of the business to be transacted shall be stated in the call, and that is the only business upon which action can be taken.
 - f) All special meetings, and any annual meeting that deals with any issues listed in Section IV.7, with the exception of the annual budget, shall also be warned by written notice two weeks before the meeting.
 - g) Elections shall be by paper ballot unless the use of such is waived by vote of the meeting in which the election is held.
 - h) The fiscal year of the church shall begin on January 1 of each year.
 - i) All officers and boards shall assume their duties upon election and shall continue in office until their successors have been elected at the next annual meeting.

Article V – Pastor

- 1) **Duties** - The pastor shall be in charge of, and have authority over, all worship services, pastoral care and teaching within the church.
- a) As the teaching & preaching elder, the pastor shall be a full voting member of the elder board and ex-officio, without vote, of the diaconate and any subcommittees.
 - b) Pulpit supply for any worship service shall be under the direction of the pastor.
 - c) The pastor is entitled to be present at, and must be notified of, any meeting of any church sanctioned group, except meetings during the time when his tenure or salary is under discussion.
 - d) Any corrective action taken by the pastor shall be reported to the elders.
 - e) The pastor cannot hold any other office or position in the church.

- 2) **Calling a Pastor** - The elders shall be responsible for the search for a new pastor and can assemble a search committee made up of church members.
 - a) The pastor shall be called for an indeterminate time and must be in full agreement with this church's Statement of Faith and Bylaws.
 - b) When a pastoral candidate has been selected, the elders shall present him to the congregation for examination and, if the congregation is so inclined, to vote on his hiring.
- 3) **Terminating a Pastoral Calling** - A pastor may, of his own volition, submit his resignation at any time, giving not less than three months' notice to the church.
 - a) A pastor's ministry may be terminated by the vote of the congregation.
 - b) A pastor whose calling has ended is entitled to continue his employment for three months or to receive a severance package worth three months of his pay and benefits.

Article VI - Elder Board

- 1) **Number** - The elder board shall consist of the pastor (as the teaching & preaching elder) and all ruling elders elected by the congregation. There shall always be at least two ruling elders on the elder board.
- 2) **Duties** - The elders are responsible for the spiritual and governing affairs of the church. This includes dealing with matters regarding worship, preaching, the officiating of the sacraments, doctrine, teaching, pastoral care, discipleship, discipline, membership, overseeing of the membership roll, creating policies and/or subcommittees (if necessary), inter-church communication and resolving disputes.
 - a) The elders shall work closely with the diaconate and any subcommittee, and should send a representative to those meetings.
 - b) The elders shall keep the congregation well informed of all their decisions, including publishing all policy statements created.
 - c) The elders can create other positions (ex: historian, newsletter editor, etc.) or subcommittees (ex: Christian education, missions, etc.) according to the needs of the church.
 - d) The elders shall have authority to make all decisions not specifically reserved for the congregation or the pastor.
 - e) If necessary, the elders can override and/or impose any decision on the diaconate or any subcommittee.
- 3) **Meetings** - The elders should meet regularly for prayer and business.
 - a) Elder board meetings will be chaired by a member of the elder board as chosen by the elders.
 - b) Minutes will be kept of all meetings.
 - c) Elder board meetings require a quorum of 50 percent of its members.

Article VII - Diaconate Board

- 1) **Number** - The diaconate shall consist of at least three members.
- 2) **Duties** - The diaconate shall assist the elders by managing the temporal affairs of the church, including: Assisting those in need; Helping in the worship service (ex. managing the paraphernalia of the worship service, distributing the Communion elements, taking collection, greeting, etc.); Managing and caring for the church's property; Collecting of monies; Recommending an annual budget to the elders; Annually reviewing the financial packages of all employees.

- 3) **Meetings** - The Diaconate should meet regularly for business.
 - a) Diaconate meetings will be chaired by a member of the diaconate as chosen by the deacons.
 - b) Minutes will be kept of all meetings.
 - c) Diaconate meetings require a quorum of 50 percent of its members.

Article VIII – Election of Elders and Deacons

- 1) The biblical qualifications for all elders (the pastor and ruling) and deacons are found in Scripture and should be applied with charity.
 - a) Pastor & ruling elders: Acts 20:17-35; 1Timothy 3:2-7; 5:17-22; Titus 1:6-9; 1Peter 5:1-4
 - b) Deacons: Acts 6:1-6; 1Timothy 3:8-13
- 2) All elders and deacons must be in full agreement with the Statement of Faith and the bylaws of this church by publicly stating so during their examination by the congregation.
 - a) Elders and deacons must be members of the church in good standing for the suggested time of at least two years, unless waved by the elder board.
 - b) Only men can serve as elders or deacons.
 - c) One cannot be an elder and a deacon at the same time.
- 3) The elders will recommend candidates for ruling elders and deacons at the annual meeting if necessary.
 - a) Those recommended to be ruling elders and deacons are to be examined by the congregation and approved or rejected by the congregation at an annual meeting.
 - b) Newly-elected elders and deacons will be commissioned with prayer and the laying on of hands at the next Lord's Day worship.
 - c) When an elder or deacon leaves their board, they are no longer an elder or deacon.
- 4) The elders can appoint a temporary ruling elder or deacon to fill an existing opening until the next annual meeting.

Article IX – Officers

- 1) The officers of the church shall be the **pastor, ruling elders, clerk, treasurer** and such other officers as the church may determine.
 - a) All officers must be members of the church. Additionally, the clerk and treasurer positions shall not be held by the same person at the same time.
 - b) The clerk and treasurer, and other officers that are not the pastor or a ruling elder, can be removed by vote of the elders who will report their action to the congregation.
- 2) The **clerk** shall be nominated by the elders and voted on by the congregation.
 - a) Under the supervision of the pastor, the clerk shall keep all records relating to membership, baptisms, marriages, funerals, etc., and receive and keep on file all church communications, congregational meetings, board and subcommittee reports, and written official reports.
 - b) The clerk shall keep a faithful record of the proceedings of all congregational meetings.
 - c) If available, the clerk may attend board meetings and take notes of the proceedings. If not a board member shall take minutes and give them to the clerk to be kept on file.
 - d) The clerk shall be charged with the responsibility of handling all correspondence and shall give legal notice of all meetings when such notices are necessary.
- 3) The **treasurer** shall be nominated by the elders and voted on by the congregation. The treasurer's duties include:

- a) Receiving all reports and deposit verifications.
- b) Paying the bills of the church on receipt from and approval by the boards or subcommittees responsible for said bills.
- c) Keeping an accurate account of all receipts and disbursements.
- d) Responsible for filing all required reports to local and federal agencies when necessary.
- f) Responsible for providing all reports required by the elders or the deacons.
- g) Delegating, if needed, certain tasks to the clerk (when agreed upon by the treasurer and the clerk).

Article X - Properties

- 1) Title to all properties held by the church shall remain with the church.
- 2) The deacons have operating control of all properties.

Article XI - Finance

- 1) The church shall receive its financial support through members' tithes and offerings, along with gifts from outside the church received with discernment, and invested funds (if any).
- 2) The annual budget will be created by the deacons taking into consideration the broad policy parameters set by the elders.
 - a) The deacons will present a budget to the elders, who after making any modifications if necessary, will bring it to the congregation for approval.
 - b) The budget shall require approval by a vote of the church at the annual meeting.
- 3) Deacons shall be in charge of financial internal control policies and procedures and the annual audit of the church's finances.

Article XII - Revisions & Amendments

- 1) These bylaws may be altered or amended by a two-thirds vote of the active members present where there is a quorum of 20 percent of the membership at any regular or special meeting of the church.
- 2) The congregation must be notified of any such vote with the specific time of the meeting and the substance of the proposed amendment. Notice will be given from the pulpit and stated in the call that shall be given to all members by written notice two weeks before the meeting.

Article XIII - Dissolution

- 1) Only the congregation has the authority to dissolve this church at a duly called and so warned meeting.
- 2) All assets will be liquidated and given to a non-profit organization(s) as agreed upon by the congregation.

First approved by vote of the Elder Board on December 10, 2023.

Amended by vote of the Congregation on May 19, 2024.