

Trinity Presbyterian Church **Bylaws**



The Bylaws of Trinity Presbytery Church Member of Evangel Presbytery (www.evangelpresbytery.com) Spartanburg, SC

Last Updated February 5, 2023

Article I - The Name

The name of this church shall be *Trinity Presbyterian Church (of Evangel Presbytery)*.

Article II - Object or Policy

The purposes of this church are the salvation of souls, the edification of Christians through the teaching of God's Word, the world-wide proclamation of God's saving grace expressed in the shed blood and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary, the promotion of godly worship, the defense of "the faith once for all delivered," and the cooperation with Christian activity and churches functioning in harmony with God's Holy Word, the Bible, until He comes again.

Article III - Doctrine

The doctrine of this church shall be that system commonly called the "Reformed Faith" as set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, together with the *Westminster Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*, and Evangel Presbytery's *Book of Church Order*, comprising the Form of Government, The Rules of Discipline, and the Directory for the Worship of God, and the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, the Chalcedonian Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—all of which are subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word of God.

Though Evangel Presybtery makes provision for credo-baptistic churches and pastors, Trinity will be exclusively paedobaptistic in her practice (see BCO 16.8). Though not required for membership in the church, officers of Trinity must affirm and practice the paedobaptistic view.

Article IV - Membership

SECTION I

Membership requirements are described in the *Book of Church Order* (see, for example, chapters 7 & 41).

SECTION II

A member shall be entitled to inspect and copy, at a reasonable time and location specified by the Session, any of the church records (Session minutes, congregational meeting minutes, rolls of the members, resolutions adopted by the Session, appropriate accounting records, bylaws, or restated bylaws and all amendments to them currently in effect) provided the Session finds that the member has a proper purpose and is acting in good faith. The Session may limit access to any records that contain confidential information about a particular person or persons.

SECTION III

Members may be removed from membership at their own request following the steps of appropriate pastoral care as set forth in *BCO* 41.4. If a member requests to withdraw because of specific problems or concerns with the church, the Session shall attempt to resolve those matters so that the member may remain in the church and enjoy greater fruitfulness and personal spiritual growth. If the Session is unable to resolve those matters, it shall offer to assist the member in locating a church of like faith and practice that can respond more effectively to his gifts and needs. If the Session determines that a member has requested removal to avoid church discipline, that request shall not be given effect until the disciplinary process has been properly concluded.

SECTION IV

Parents or sponsors of minor children who become members will sign the Membership Commitment form along with the minor children. These parents and sponsors must themselves be members in good standing of the church. When these children reach the age of eighteen, they shall meet with an elder or pastor of the church and, as a testimony to their continued confession, re-sign the Membership Commitment as adults.

Article V - Government

SECTION I

The Session and Diaconate of this church shall act as the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall meet at least once a year. The powers of the Board of Trustees are described in *BCO 27.7*.

SECTION II

This church shall be governed by its Session whose powers are described in chapter 14 of the *Book of Church Order*.

Article VI - The Election of Officers and Pastors

SECTION I

The process for electing ruling elders and deacons is outlined in chapter 26 of the *Book of Church Order*.

A) EXAMINATION AND CERTIFICATION

At such times as determined by the Session, any voting communicant member may propose to the Session nominations for the offices of elder and deacon (*BCO 26.1*). The Session shall deem eligible those nominees whom, upon examination, it judges to possess the necessary qualifications for office (*BCO 26.1*). Before election to a new term, all officers shall be briefly examined by the session and re-certified for election. A ruling elder or deacon who had been previously declared eligible but who resigned from or was divested of the office must be re-examined and declared eligible for election.

B) TERMS

Ruling elders and deacons shall be elected for three-year terms of service. Any elder or deacon who has served two consecutive terms must take a one year sabbatical before serving again in that particular office. The session shall consider any requests by officers for a sabbatical from office.

SECTION II

The process for calling a pastor, assistant pastor, or associate pastor is outlined in chapters 22-24 of the *Book of Church Order*.

SECTION III

The process for dissolving of the pastoral relation is outlined in chapter 25 of the *Book of Church Order*.

Article VII - Duties of Pastors and Officers

SECTION I

The duties, responsibilities, and powers of the pastor (Minister of the Word) are described in the *Book of Church Order* (see, for example, chapter 9).

SECTION II

The duties, responsibilities, and powers of the elders (ruling elders) are described in the *Book of Church Order* (see, for example, chapter 10).

SECTION III

The duties, responsibilities, and powers of the deacons are described in the *Book of Church Order* (see, for example, chapter 11).

SECTION IV

The duties and responsibilities of the Clerk of Session are described in chapter 12.4 of the *Book of Church Order*.

SECTION V

A Recording Clerk may be appointed by the Session. The Recording Clerk shall be a member of Trinity Presbyterian Church. The duties of the Recording Clerk shall be to record appropriate and thorough minutes during Session and Congregational meetings, and, as soon as practicable, to convey the minutes in type-written form (or any other form acceptable to the Clerk of Session), properly recorded, to the Clerk of Session for editing

and publishing. The minutes shall be reviewed by the Clerk and Moderator of Session prior to circulation to the Session for their review and approval. The Recording Clerk will hold the deliberations and discussions of Session meetings in the strictest confidence.

SECTION VI

Two treasurers, a recording treasurer and a dispersing treasurer, shall be appointed by the Ruling Elders as described in chapter 10.4 of the *Book of Church Order*. The recording treasurer shall be responsible for the counting and depositing of funds each week to the account of the church, in a bank designated by the Trustees. The dispersing treasurer shall draw checks against these funds as directed by the Trustees. There shall be kept under his direction, each month a financial statement showing the true status on the various funds in this account, to be approved by the Session. There shall also be kept under his direction, a ledger showing the cash account of all funds and a balance taken at the close of each month. He shall also have prepared in approved form under his direction, a financial statement showing the true status of all funds for the fiscal year of the church, for presentation at the Annual Congregational Meeting. He shall also have the custody of the legal papers pertaining to the property and finances of the church, such as deeds, abstracts, insurance policies, bonds, notes, etc., which shall be kept in a depository designated by the Trustees; and any access he may have to this depository shall be made under the direction of the Trustees. His book shall at any time be available to the Session or Trustees, and must be submitted to audit at least once a year, as directed by the Trustees.

SECTION VII

Pastors shall be eligible for a three-month sabbatical every seven years of service.

Article VIII - Meetings

SECTION I

The fiscal year of this church shall end December 31 and an annual congregational meeting shall be held on a date determined by the Session and announced to the congregation at least two weeks in advance.

SECTION II

At the Annual Meeting, the minutes of the preceding Annual Meeting, and the reports of the Clerk of Session and all organizations, committees, or ministries of the church shall be presented, the church's yearly financial report rendered (including the approved budget for the current year), and officers elected (if so determined by the Session). Also such other business as determined necessary by the Session shall be transacted.

SECTION III

Any regular or called meeting of the congregation may be constituted a meeting for the transaction of business, providing announcements of said meeting be given from the pulpit at least two weeks in advance. The purpose of the meeting must be clearly stated in the announcement, and no additional business at that meeting may be conducted. Additional guidelines, including the process and requirements for the congregation to request a congregational meeting and the quorum requirements, are found in *Book of Church Order* chapter 27.

SECTION IV

A majority vote of the voting members present at any constitutionally called congregational business meeting shall be required for the election of officers (see *BCO* 22 and 26) or to render final decision in any matter under consideration, except amendment to this constitution (see Article X).

SECTION V

In the conduct of business meetings, any parliamentary questions not covered by this constitution shall be decided by the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*, as interpreted by the moderator of the meeting in consultation with a parliamentarian, if one is appointed for the meeting.

SECTION VI

Those voting in any constituted meeting of the church shall be communicant members of the church in good standing and at least sixteen (16) years of age.

Article IX - Confidentiality

SECTION VI

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (see Prov. 12:23, Eccl. 3:7b, Matt. 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov. 16:28; 26:20), invites confession (see Prov. 11:13; 28:13; James 5:16), and encourages people to seek needed counseling (see Prov. 20:19; Rom. 15:14). Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and the work of this church, all members are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others. In particular, our pastor(s) and elders shall carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling, subject to the following guidelines.

SECTION II

Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as possible, there are times when it is appropriate to reveal certain information to others. In particular, when the pastors and elders of this church believe it is Biblically necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

- (1) When a pastor or elder is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other pastors or elders in this church or, if the person attends another church, from the pastors or elders of that church (see Prov. 11:14; 13:10; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; Matt. 18:15-17);
- (2) When the person who disclosed the information or any other person is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (see Prov. 24:11-12);
- (3) When a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to institute disciplinary proceedings (see Matt. 18:15-20) or seek the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this church (see, for example, Rom. 13:1-5); or
- (4) When required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect (see, <https://dss.sc.gov/abuseneglect/mandated-reporters/>).

SECTION III

Scripture commands that confidential information is to be shared with others only when a problem cannot be resolved through the efforts of a small group of people within the church (Matt. 18:15-17). Therefore, except as provided in Article IX, Section II, a pastor or elder may not disclose confidential information to anyone outside this church without the approval of the Session or the consent of the person who originally disclosed the information. The Session may approve such disclosure only when it finds that all internal efforts to resolve a problem have been exhausted (see, for example, 1 Cor. 6:1-8) and the problem cannot be satisfactorily resolved without the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this church (see, for example, Rom. 13:1-5).

SECTION IV

The pastors and elders may, but need not, provide counselees with written notice of these confidentiality provisions, but these provisions shall be in effect regardless of whether such notice is given.

Article X - Amendments

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote at any regular or special meeting, provided the proposed amendment has been presented to the congregation in writing two weeks prior to said meeting. Printed and digital copies of the proposed changes will be supplied to voting members of the church.

Article XI - Declaration of Doctrine and Policies Concerning Sexuality

Introduction

Since the mid-twentieth century, rebellion against God's divine pattern of sex within the loving union of lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual marriage has become widespread, and those attacks are increasingly perpetrated in concert with the civil magistrate. Thus for the protection of the Christian church's conscience and the purity of the Faith once for all delivered to the saints, it has become necessary for Christians to declare our Scriptural convictions and commitments concerning sexuality and marriage. These convictions and commitments are testified to by God's natural revelation and they are

explicitly commanded by God’s special revelation of Holy Scripture. Prior generations of Christians and non-Christians alike lived under the beneficial constraints of laws written to protect civil society from sexual relations outside these commands of Scripture. Western law reinforced God’s law concerning sexual relations and His Order of Creation of Adam first, then Eve. For this reason, the church had no need to adopt doctrinal creeds or statements concerning sexuality. Now though, with the heathens’ attack growing ever more intense and becoming institutionalized by the power of civil authority, the time has come for the church to declare her allegiance to God’s law of male and female, and to do so specifically, forthrightly, and with confidence in the wisdom and kindness of God. He is the One who made us. We did not make ourselves. He is the One who created us male and female, pronouncing His creation “very good” only after He had made man and woman.

Declarations and Policies

1. “In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. God created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.”¹ God formed the first male, Adam, from the dust of the ground. He made the first female, Eve, from Adam’s rib² and presented her to Adam to be his helpmeet. Adam called his wife “Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”³ God named the race *adam* after the first man Adam.⁴
2. From the beginning, God gave Adam authority over Eve and responsibility for her. This authority and responsibility are inseparably joined together. Eve was created to be a “help meet” for Adam,⁵ that is, a help fitting for Adam. God’s decree of father-rule is the necessary outworking of the authority over Eve and responsibility for her that He placed on Adam. Man is to love and take responsibility for woman by leading her and laying down his life for her, providing a living illustration of Christ’s sacrificial leadership of His Bride, the Church. This estate of male responsibility and authority is not a consequence of

¹ Genesis 5:2. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are to the New American Standard Bible (1995).

² “However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God” (1 Corinthians 11:11–12).

³ Genesis 2:23.

⁴ See Hebrew word translated as “man” in Genesis 1:27, and throughout the Old Testament.

⁵ Genesis 2:18 (KJV).

the Fall, but was ordained by God in the beginning: “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.”⁶ God’s subordination of the woman to man in no way diminishes the woman’s perfect equality with man in essence, worth, and honor.

3. God’s bifurcation of mankind into two and only two sexes, male and female, is an act of His creative will and power and continues through the generations since Adam, our first father.
4. God forms each person in his mother’s womb and creates the unborn child male or female.⁷ From the moment of conception,⁸ males are distinct from females, and females are distinct from males.⁹
5. What God has decreed as each one’s sex at the moment of conception, either male or female, is His gift and must be received with gratitude, each man living out his manhood and each woman her womanhood, in humble reliance upon God’s grace.
6. God’s created order of man and woman was established while man was in a state of perfection before the Fall. God’s creation of Adam first, then Eve, is the origin of Scripture’s condemnation of woman exercising authority over man and is further delineated by Scripture’s declaration that man is the glory of God, but

⁶ 1 Timothy 2:12–14.

⁷ See Psalm 139:13–16; Genesis 5:2.

⁸ Because all truth is God’s truth and God is not a man that He should lie, what God reveals through His Creation never contradicts what He reveals in His Word. Thus, genetics and other scientific disciplines, when not abused or corrupted for sinful purposes, can declare truth. It is proper then to recognize that a man conceived and born a man is genetically male, and a woman conceived and born a woman is genetically female.

⁹ This is not to address the extremely rare case of intersex children born with a variety of conditions, including: Not XX and Not XY, Hypospadias, Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, Ovotestes, etc. “Intersex” is a medical diagnosis of atypical male or female anatomies not to be confused with those born with typical male or female anatomies who claim a “transgender” or “transsexual” identity. The suffering of those born with physical anomalies must not be used to justify the rebellion of those who repudiate the sex God made them. All such abnormalities and genetic deformities (e.g., deafness, blindness, etc.) along with illness of any kind, pain, suffering, and death itself, are a result of the Fall as described in Genesis 3, and pass through God’s sovereign hand as He gives to each man both good and adversity. Exodus 4:11; Job 2:9–10.

woman is the glory of man.¹⁰ This order of creation, then, is a universal truth for all mankind.

7. The proper conception of “sexual identity” is a matter of being and obeying the genetic sex God made us, either male or female. Genetic sex and sexual identity cannot be separated, and they remain bound together throughout one’s life. Sexuality does not admit of gradations. You are either male or female, not part male and part female. Nor are there a great multitude of sexual identities. There are only two, male and female. Any attempt of a man to play the woman or a woman to play the man violates God’s decree, attacks His created order, and constitutes sin so serious that God Himself pronounces it an “abomination.”¹¹
8. This sin includes transvestitism and any efforts, including chemical or surgical, as well as behavioral (e.g., effeminacy), to reject and efface one’s sex and to adopt characteristics of the opposite sex.
9. This sin also includes the conscription of woman as a military combatant or the placing of woman in harm’s way as a law enforcement officer. Following the example of Christ Jesus who gave up His life for His Bride, the Church, man is to lay down his life in defense of woman.¹² As life-giver,¹³ woman has always been honored by man’s defense of her and her children. A civil magistrate defaces woman’s sexuality by placing her in the uniform of a combatant¹⁴ and commanding her to take up arms. Further, given woman’s comparative physical weakness in the face of male enemies, such magistrates place their homeland at unnecessary risk. Finally, female military combatants of childbearing age often (whether known or unknown) place at risk unborn children, which is an act contrary to the just war principle of avoiding needless loss of life. Therefore, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC, condemns the use of women as

¹⁰ “For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake” (1 Corinthians 11:7–9).

¹¹ Deuteronomy 22:5. See also 1 Corinthians 6:9–10.

¹² See Ephesians 5:25.

¹³ See Genesis 3:20.

¹⁴ See Deuteronomy 22:5. In the text, “that which pertaineth to a man” (KJV) refers to the clothing and weapons worn by men for combat.

military combatants, the conscription of women into the armed forces, and any requirement for her to register for conscription into military service.¹⁵

10. All the sins mentioned above are violations of the separate nature and callings of Adam and Eve, man and woman. Through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, there is full forgiveness for each of these sins.
11. It is a particularly necessary and vital ministry of the church today to proclaim this forgiveness and to teach and help those who repent of these sins to live faithfully as the man or woman God made them.
12. As the household of faith, the church is privileged to assist parents in training boys to be men and girls to be women. This training is not simply Christian discipleship but is also part of the Church's proclamation of the Gospel for the salvation of mankind.
13. Being committed to such evangelism and discipleship, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC, limits participation in any program or activity that is limited to men (e.g., a men's Bible study or a men's retreat) exclusively to males.
14. Participation in any program or activity of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC, that is limited to women (e.g., a women's Bible study or a women's retreat) is exclusively limited to females.
15. Access to facilities of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC, that are designated for use by men (e.g., a men's restroom) is exclusively limited to males.
16. Access to facilities of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC, that are designated for use by women (e.g., a women's restroom or nursing/cry room, etc.) is exclusively limited to females.
17. Recognizing the church's own sins and failures in obeying God's commands of sexuality and recognizing that sinners on the road of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ often enter the church bound in deep patterns of sexual sin, it is not our expectation that sinners will respond to the preaching of the Law and the proclamation of the Gospel with immediate and full repentance. For this reason, wise and compassionate pastoral discretion is necessary to apply the

¹⁵ See Constitution and Bylaws of Trinity Presbyterian Church (Evangel Presbytery) (Spartanburg, SC), art. XIII ("Selective Service") (updated May 28, 2017). See also, "Man's Duty to Protect Woman," Majority Report of the Presbyterian Church in America's General Assembly Ad Interim Study Committee on Women in the Military, 2001, <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/studies/01-278.html>.

rules set forth in this Declaration, especially concerning access to facilities. In certain instances the higher law of love will preclude swift and rigid enforcement of rules. For example, if a female has transitioned to a male in appearance, it may be best that she not use the bathroom of her birth sex until she has been presented with pastoral counsel concerning God's calling of manhood and womanhood and she begins to learn of Jesus' Lordship over her sexuality and the implications it has for her sexual identity and its public expression. In this case, the female would be asked not to use the men's restroom, but instead a single-stall restroom available to either sex.

18. Marriage is instituted by God as the union of one male and one female,¹⁶ which union is intended to be monogamous¹⁷ and lifelong.¹⁸ This relationship, with these limitations, was established while man was in a state of perfection before the Fall¹⁹ and is established for all members of the human race. Marriage is an honorable estate that God Himself made, and it symbolizes to us the mystical union which is between Christ and His Church.²⁰ For centuries, Christians have recognized the following vital purposes of marriage: "Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with an holy seed; and for preventing of

¹⁶ "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Mark 10:7-9).

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

¹⁷ "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).

¹⁸ "So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man" (Romans 7:3).

¹⁹ See Genesis 2:18-24.

²⁰ "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:25-32).

uncleanness.”²¹ This holy estate Christ made beautiful by His presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.²²

19. When sin entered the race, marriage was sorely affected.²³ God therefore created laws to govern the violation of His established pattern, while not changing the pattern.²⁴ Since marriage is a lifelong and monogamous union, God forbids divorce except in two circumstances: (1) when one spouse abandons the other,²⁵ and (2) when a spouse engages in sexual immorality—what Jesus referred to as the sin of porneia.²⁶

20. More broadly, in His Law God forbids any deviation from the established pattern of marriage and from His gift of sexual union to be enjoyed by a married couple. These forbidden deviations include lust for anyone but one’s spouse, pornography,²⁷ masturbation (including simulated copulation with any inanimate

²¹ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, ch. 24 (“Of Marriage and Divorce”), para. 2. *Confession of Faith* hereinafter abbreviated as “WCF.”

²² See John 2:1–11.

²³ “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ He said, ‘I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.’ And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’” (Genesis 3:6–11).

²⁴ “He said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way’” (Matthew 19:8).

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18).

²⁵ Abandonment or “wilful desertion” (WCF 24.6) is not limited only to cases of one spouse’s unjustified departure and refusal to be reconciled to the abandoned or injured spouse. A state of willful desertion also exists if the offending party’s conduct is so egregious that the injured party is forced to leave the marital home and reconciliation is impossible due to the nature or seriousness of the sin and the offending party’s persistent impenitence. As in any other case involving the Scriptural permissibility of divorce, the board of elders will judge whether the offending party’s sin justifies the injured party in separating and seeking dissolution of the marital bond. Two resources we commend in considering cases of divorce are: “Marriage, Singleness, Divorce, and Remarriage,” statement adopted by the session of Church of the Good Shepherd, June 2, 1999, available at <http://clearnotebloomington.com/position-papers>; and “Divorce and Remarriage,” Report of the Ad-Interim Study Committee on Marriage and Divorce to the Twentieth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1992, <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/divorce-remarriage.pdf>.

²⁶ See “Marriage, Singleness, Divorce, and Remarriage,” pp. 3–4. See also WCF 24.6.

²⁷ “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

object no matter how lifelike),²⁸ fornication,²⁹ adultery,³⁰ polygamy,³¹ incest,³² pedophilia,³³ homosexuality,³⁴ and bestiality.³⁵ Because the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, it is impossible to catalog fully all forms of sexual immorality and degradation.

²⁸ “Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority* of the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the avenger* in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you” (1 Thessalonians 4:1–8).

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

²⁹ “Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

³⁰ “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).

³¹ “And He answered and said, ‘Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate” (Matthew 19:4–6).

“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife . . .” (1 Timothy 3:2).

³² “If there is a man who lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have committed incest, their bloodguiltiness is upon them” (Leviticus 20:12). See also all of Leviticus 20.

³³ “He said to His disciples, ‘It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble” (Luke 17:1–2).

³⁴ “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22).

³⁵ “Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion” (Leviticus 18:23).

21. God offers the free gift of forgiveness for these sins through repentance and faith in Jesus, and He has called the Church to proclaim that repentance and forgiveness, seeking the healing of those harmed by these sins.³⁶
22. Presently, there is widespread disregard, even scorn, for the divine standard of sexuality and marriage as revealed in Scripture. This disregard, which is found both in the world and in many churches, endangers the family (our basic social unit) and causes much suffering to the innocent, especially children. When found in the Church, it brings shame to the name of Christ.³⁷
23. A pastor, officer, leader, teacher, employee, or member of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC, shall not solemnize a marriage or officiate at a wedding in any place or under any circumstances that violate God's Law or His established pattern of marriage between one male and one female, which union is intended to be monogamous and lifelong. Recognizing the universal application of God's Order of Creation and the resultant Scriptural command that wives submit to their husbands, any wedding solemnized by a pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC, will include in the wife's vows her promise to "obey" her husband. This promise to "obey" will also be required in any wedding permitted by Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC's Board of Elders to be held on church property or in a church facility but officiated by a pastor unaffiliated with this congregation.
24. The property or any facility of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC, shall not be used for a marriage ceremony, wedding, or related event that violates

³⁶ "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the Lord has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1).

"A battered reed He will not break off,
And a smoldering wick He will not put out,
Until He leads justice to victory" (Matthew 12:20).

³⁷ "However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die" (2 Samuel 12:14). This text demonstrates dishonor coming to God's holy name and suffering coming to the members of a man's family—both caused by the sin of the father.

"For 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' just as it is written" (Romans 2:24).

God's Law or His established pattern of marriage between one male and one female, which union is intended to be monogamous and lifelong.

25. All ministries of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC, including educational ministries for youth, shall adhere to and abide by this Declaration.
26. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only infallible rule of faith and practice and the only authority that may bind the conscience.
27. This Declaration does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs and practices. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of authority for all that we believe and do. For purposes of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg SC's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the Board of Elders (Session) is the church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

Article XII - Concealed Weapon Permission

SECTION I

In accordance with and pursuant to the provisions of the South Carolina "Law Abiding Citizens Self-Defense Act of 1996," as the governing body or authority of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg, SC we hereby approve and permit the carrying of concealed weapons by approved license holders on the property of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg, SC.

SECTION II

Concealed weapons must be sufficiently holstered, remain under the owner's complete control at all times, and may not be left unattended in any type of bag or container.

SECTION III

All members and regular attenders of Trinity Presbyterian Church who intend to carry concealed weapons on church property must request permission from the session. The names of persons permitted to carry on the church's property will be recorded in session meeting minutes.

SECTION IV

The session has the right and authority at any time, to deny, revoke and withdraw its permission to carry a concealed weapon on church property if an individual is unwilling to comply with the requirements and policies of the church, or for any reason that the session, in its judgment, deems to be for the greatest safety and harmony of the congregation. Flaunting, irresponsible handling or unwarranted use of a weapon shall be grounds for the immediate withdrawal of permission to carry a concealed weapon. Permission to carry concealed weapons on the property of Trinity Presbyterian Church will be revoked by the session (and recorded in the minutes of the Session) when a church member or regular attender no longer attends the church or when a member moves his membership to another church.

Article XIII - Selective Service

SECTION I

Contrary to the policies of the United States Military, God's Word requires the principled opposition to women serving in military combat positions.³⁸ At her 30th General Assembly (2002) the Presbyterian Church in America adopted the following recommendation from the Ad Interim Study Committee on Women in the Military: "This Assembly declares it to be the biblical duty of man to defend woman and therefore condemns the use of women as military combatants, as well as any conscription of women into the Armed Services of the United States."³⁹ We reaffirm the arguments made in the majority report of that committee and understand the title of that document to be a succinct summary of Scripture's teaching: "Man's Duty to Protect Woman." The following paragraphs from "Man's Duty to Protect Woman" are a concise summary of the Biblical arguments:

³⁸ On January 24, 2013, the former Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army General Martin E. Dempsey, rescinded the policy that women are excluded from combat service (see, <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=119098>). In January of 2016, Defense Secretary Ash Carter implemented the removal of all sex-based restrictions for women and military service (see, <https://www.sss.gov/Registration/Women-And-Draft>). Since that time Congressional legislation has been proposed, but not passed, that would require women to register with the Selective Service System (for example, see, <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=119098> and <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/15/us/politics/congress-women-military-draft.html>).

³⁹ <http://pcahistory.org/pca/studies/aiscwim.html>

First, God the Father wages war in defense of Israel, His Bride; Christ our Savior fights to the Death defending His Bride, the Church; the Holy Spirit calls men as officers to guard and protect His Bride; the duty to protect the Garden of Eden and the warning not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was given by God to Adam; husbands protect their wives, not wives their husbands. Thus we are taught the binding nature of man's duty to guard and protect his home and wife.

Second, woman is the weaker sex and part of her weakness is the vulnerability attendant to her greatest privilege—that God has made her the “Mother of all the living.” Men are to guard and protect her as she carries in her womb, gives birth to, and nurses her children.

Third, we are to renounce every thought and action which tends towards a diminishment of sexual differentiation since God made it and called it “good.” [E.g. Scripture's injunctions concerning women exercising authority over men (1 Timothy 2), women or men wearing clothing of the opposite sex (Deuteronomy 22:5), sodomy (Leviticus 20:15-16), etc.] Rather than a stingy attitude which minimizes sexuality's implications, we ought to rejoice in this, His blessing.

We also object to the conscription of women on the following ground: the habitual carrying of an innocent non-combatant—the pre-born child in his mother's womb—into warfare without his informed consent is immoral. Professor Vern Poythress explains:

...to conscript women is immoral, because it unnecessarily endangers the lives of fetuses. The fact that the commanders and/or conscriptors cannot know with certainty is the problem. Principles like the goring ox and the rail around the roof of houses show that we must not only not be guilty of willfully taking innocent life, but must protect against opening the possibility of accidental taking of life.⁴⁰

The authors of “Man's Duty to Protect Woman” conclude:

We...are convinced that the creation order of sexuality places on man the duty to lay down his life for his wife. Women and men alike must be led to understand

⁴⁰ <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/studies/01-278.html>

and obey this aspect of the biblical doctrine of sexuality, believing that such will lead to the unity and purity of the Church, and to the glory of God. Those who deny this duty, whether in word or action, oppose the Word of God. Taken together, we believe the above arguments provide a clear and compelling scriptural rationale for declaring our Church's principled opposition to women serving in military combat positions.⁴¹

Therefore, Trinity Presbyterian Church objects to the use of women as military combatants, the conscription of women into the armed forces of the United States⁴² for either combatant or non-combatant positions, and the requirement to register for potential conscription into military service. We refuse to submit to any governmental coercion compelling women to serve in or in any way subject themselves to potential conscription into the armed forces of the United States. Such a refusal to submit is not a violation of the admonition in Romans 13 to obey the civil authorities, because “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29) when any claim of the civil government contradicts the Word of God. Any civil authority requiring or compelling women to compulsory military service does so in violation of the Word of God, particularly God’s doctrine of personhood grounded at the most basic level in the sexual calling He gave each person when He made us either male or female. As Jesus said, “...from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female” (Mark 10:6).

SECTION II

In the case of a Biblically unjust war, we additionally object to the conscription of any member into the armed forces of the United States. We refuse to submit to any governmental coercion compelling men to serve in the armed forces of the United States in the particular instance of an unjust war. Such a refusal to submit is not a violation of the admonition in Romans 13 to obey the civil authorities, because “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29) when any claim of the civil government contradicts the Word of God. We affirm the following statement from our constitutional document, Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 23.2, drawing attention to the limits placed on the work of civil magistrates (“to maintain piety, justice, and peace”) and the lawful conditions of warfare (“upon just and necessary occasion”):

⁴¹ <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/studies/01-278.html>

⁴² Throughout this article our reference to the “armed forces of the United States” intends to include any local, state, national, or international military forces.

It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto: in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth; so, for that end, they may lawfully, now under the new testament, wage war, upon just and necessary occasion.

SECTION III

We affirm our government's God-given responsibility to protect her citizens and give thanks to God for those men who serve in the armed forces, doing their part to fulfill that responsibility in obedience to God and His commands.