

SESSION THREE:

WHAT IS TRINITY LIKE?

Who we are and becoming a partner with us and God

To the church of God in Corinth... 1 Cor. 1:2

For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace....Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. 1 Cor. 14:33,40

While there is only one true Church, the universal Church, there are millions of local churches around the world that display a variety of music, organizational styles, strategies and sizes. **In biblical churches most of these differences are minor when compared to the key doctrines of the faith.** Because the Bible is not an exhaustive book teaching every little detail of church life and practice, there is room for diversity in a number of aspects of what churches look like and how they do things. This lesson will help you understand how Trinity is similar to other churches, how we are different and how to become a member.

I. OUR DOCTRINE AND KEY BELIEFS

A. Our Commitment to the Essential Doctrines

1. In **essential** beliefs, we have _____; in **non-essential** beliefs, we have _____; and in **all** our beliefs, we show _____

There is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Eph. 4:4-6

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls....So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Rom. 14:1,4,12,22

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 1 Cor. 13:2

Examples of Essential Beliefs:

Examples of Non-essential Beliefs:

B. Our Essential Doctrines: Our Doctrinal Statement

Section 1: The Bible

We believe that the Bible is God's word, is without error in the original writings, and is the ultimate authority for all matters of life and faith.

Section 2: God

We believe in one true and living God, who exists in three persons.

God the Father is the maker of all things, seen and unseen.

Jesus Christ is his only Son, our Lord and Savior, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, led a sinless life, was crucified, buried and raised on the third day; he ascended back to heaven where he now sits at the right hand of God.

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin and empowers the Christian for a life of righteousness.

Section 3: Mankind

We believe that God created people in His image as male and female, and were originally without sin. But Adam, the first man, chose to sin and subsequently, the effects of his sin were passed on to everyone born. As a result, each person is born with a sin nature that eventually results in willful acts of sin. When a person sins, they become guilty and separated from God.

Section 4: Salvation

We believe that every person has sinned and is incapable of paying the penalty for their sin. Because of God's justice and love, He sent Jesus to the earth where he lived a sinless life and qualified to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised on the third day. Jesus paid for our sins and now offers to us complete forgiveness and eternal life as a gift. We receive this gift by faith alone, without any works, trusting in his life and death to pay for our sins. A person who receives eternal life can never lose their salvation.

Section 5: Sanctification

We believe that God's goal for every Christian is to become conformed to the image of Christ; this transformation process is empowered and accomplished by the Holy Spirit, working with and through a person's efforts and discipline, in accordance with the Bible.

Section 6: The Church

We believe that the church is the world-wide community of born-again believers and that TBC is a local community of such believers who worship, fellowship and grow together.

Section 7: Christian Baptism

We believe in the baptism of believers by immersion in water, symbolizing the believer's faith in Christ's completed work and identifying with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Mt. 28:19, Rom. 6:3-4).

Section 8: The Lord's Supper

We believe that, in obedience to Christ's command, we are to regularly celebrate the Lord's supper in which the bread and cup represent Christ's body and blood.

Section 9: The Lord's Return

We believe that Jesus will return bodily to earth in glory to establish his kingdom. At the end of the ages, he will judge the living and the dead. Those who have believed in Christ as their Savior will enjoy eternal fellowship with God in heaven; those who have not received Christ will be eternally separated from God in hell.

II. OUR STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Trinity seeks to combine the leadership pattern of the Bible with effective, relevant and current organizational principles that allow us to maximize our ministry. Our structure changes to fit the changing needs of our church. We want to minimize bureaucracy and maximize effectiveness. Therefore, we seek to develop and empower leaders who will continually develop and expand the ministries of the church so that we might fulfill our purposes in a greater way.

A. The Leadership of the Church

1. The Church's Head is _____

*He [Jesus] is the **head of the body**, the church. Colossians 1:18*

2. The Church's Local Leaders are _____

*The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and **appoint elders** in every town, as I directed you. Titus 1:5*

Their Primary Responsibilities

1. To _____ the people

*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. **Be shepherds** of the church of God. Acts 20:28*

a. _____ (feeding)

*When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ... "**Feed my lambs.**"... "**Feed my sheep.**" John 21:15,17*

***Preach the Word**; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage— with great patience and careful instruction. 2 Timothy 4:2*

b. _____ (helping to meet physical, emotional and spiritual needs)

*Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "**Take care of my sheep.**" John 21:16*

*And we urge you, brothers, **warn** those who are idle, **encourage** the timid, **help** the weak, be patient with everyone. 1 Thessalonians 5:14*

c. _____ (helping to warn against enemies)

*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons....If you **point these things out** to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. 1 Timothy 4:1,6*

2. To _____ the Church

*The Elders who **direct the affairs of the church** well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. 1 Tim. 5:17*

*Obey **your leaders** and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17*

3. To _____ people for ministry

*It was he [Christ] who gave some to be...pastors and teachers, to **prepare God's people** for works of service. Eph. 4:11-12*

B. The Organization of the Church

Our organizational chart is on Appendix C.

C. Decision-Making and Voting in the Church

Decisions in the church are made by three groups:

1. The Church Members vote to:
 - approve the Elders and Trustees of the church
 - approve the purchase or sale of church property
 - approve loans the church may take out
 - hire and fire of the Senior Pastor
2. The Trustees vote to:
 - approve the budget
 - make decisions about the facilities and property,
 - approve other financially-related issues

3. The Elders make decisions on everything else.

Even though they make most of the decisions, the Elders will always seek the input of church members before they make major decisions that impact the church.

III. OUR HISTORY

Every church has a history and is a product of people and events that have shaped the past and point to the future. Trinity's first service was held November 5, 1950. We celebrate the good things God has done in the past and build on it toward the future. A brief history of Trinity is in **Appendix E**.

Trinity is also a part of the Church's history, and especially a part of the events of the Reformation. Because of the Reformation, Christendom began to split into many

denominations and groups. Trinity is part of the baptistic tradition, which traces its roots out of the English Anglican Church, though we trace our roots doctrinally and theologically out of the Anabaptist movement. You can see the diversity in the “**Protestant Tree**” chart in **Appendix F**.

IV. OUR AFFILIATIONS

A. Interchurch Affiliations

To help fulfill the Great Commission and to affirm the unity of the Church, Trinity is affiliated with other church associations:

—**MissonNortheast** - a regional group of churches in the seven Northeast states (New York to Maine)

—**Vision New England** - a group of evangelical churches working together to reach New England through a variety of ministries.

—**National Association of Evangelicals** - a group of evangelical churches in America which support and encourage Christian work and influence in America.

In addition, we may belong to various other associations that are similar in doctrine and purposes, so we can work together with other churches to achieve greater goals than would be possible with just our church working alone. This also helps us recognize we are part of the greater, universal Church.

B. Missions Affiliations

Jesus’ command to make disciples in all the world is far beyond the capability of any church. Therefore, we have joined together with other like-minded churches and organizations to cooperate in carrying out this great commission. Trinity supports a variety of missionaries, both in the United States and in other countries, who are working to share the good news of Jesus around the world.

Missionaries and groups we are currently supporting or have supported:

- *WorldVenture*
- *Gospel for Asia*
- *MissionsDoor*
- *Transworld Radio*
- *Wycliffe Bible Translators*
- *Prison Fellowship*
- *Intervarsity Christian Fellowship*
- *Vision New England*
- *Navigators*
- *Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru)*
- *Samaritan’s Purse*
- *World Vision*

V. OUR MEMBERSHIP

A. What Is Membership?

Membership is officially joining the church.

Membership is also becoming a _____ with God and all the others in the church through whom God is seeking to fulfill his plans and purposes in the world.

B. Reasons Why Membership Is Important

1. An **Historical** Reason: The first _____ recognized a formal membership

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. Acts 2:41

More and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. Acts 5:14

In the early church, baptism was the way in which a new Christian showed their commitment to Christ and the Church. They were identified as members, or as the Bible says, *they were added to their number.*

2. A **Spiritual** Reason: It produces spiritual _____ in our lives
And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:24

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. This accountability gives us the occasional nudge we need to make changes in our lives or to be faithful in fulfilling our responsibilities. You cannot be accountable when you are not committed to any specific church family.

3. A **Generational** Reason: It communicates to our _____

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.” Deut. 6:6-7

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them. Ps. 78:5-6a

Children learn from their parents what is important and what they should be committed to. When a parent makes a commitment to join the church, their children see that as part of the Christian life and something they should also do.

4. A **Legal** Reason: It protects the rights of _____ and of the _____

When a person becomes a member, they agree to abide by the church's by-laws and the church commits to treat them according to the Bible. In the rare times in which church discipline is taken, the church must act by the guidelines of the Bible and this protects both the individual and the church from legal action.

C. What Is Expected of Me As a Member?

Being a member is just being responsible to live the way God wants every Christian to live. We have listed some of the main things we try to do as Christians in our Church Covenant.

Trinity Church Covenant

In dependence on Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we affirm that it is our desire to grow in our love for God and our love for one another.

In response to God's love for us, we will:

- *Meet together regularly to worship Him*
- *Read His word consistently to know Him better*

Because of our love for one another we will:

- *Pray for one another*
- *Serve one another*
- *Build up one another*
- *Promote the unity in our church family*

Because of God's love for the world, we will:

- *Live in a way that brings glory to God and draws people to him*
- *Share the good news of Jesus with others*

D. How Do I Become a Member?

Any person age 18 or older who meets the following qualifications may be received into full voting membership at Trinity.

1. Acknowledges and repents of their sins and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.
2. Is baptized by immersion after believing in Jesus Christ.
3. Lives in a manner that is consistent with biblical teaching.
4. Reads and is in agreement with the Doctrinal Statement and the Church Covenant.
5. Completes the membership class.
6. Meets with designated members of the Elder Board and affirms that they have met the above qualifications for membership.

VI. PLACES TO SERVE

Part of our mission and God's design of each person is that they find an opportunity to serve. There are many places to serve at Trinity, both in the church and in the community. While CLASS 301 goes into more detail about how God has given you your unique SHAPE, we want to help each person find a place of ministry sooner than later, that will enable them to make a difference in the lives of others for God.

We have listed a variety of options in our “Ministry Opportunities at Trinity” brochure. Ministry opportunities are not limited to just what are in the brochure. We can also help you find a place to serve that fits your time and interest. After looking over the options, and/or talking to one of the staff, you can fill out the “Ministries I Would Like to Try” form and give it to a staff person or talk to a ministry leader.

VII. GETTING TO FIRST BASE

To get to first base and to build the first part of your foundation for your Christian life, you need to do the following (if you haven’t yet):

A. Become a Christian

B. Be Baptized

C. Become a Member of the Church

D. Be Involved in Church

1. _____

With _____

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.

Matthew 22:37-38

Let us not neglect our church meetings, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near.

Heb. 10:25 (LB)

With _____

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:34-35

2. _____

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:18

We have a number of Adult Bible Fellowship groups on Sunday morning and Small Groups that meet throughout the week.

3. _____

God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other.

1 Peter 4:10 (LB)

Find a place to serve in the church, and find a place to serve in the community on an occasional or regular basis.

E. Support the church through your _____

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Cor. 9:7

VIII. LOOSE ENDS AND FINAL DETAILS

A. Communications

At Trinity, we have several ways of staying in touch with one another, for passing on prayer needs or enlisting help.

1. Web site: www.TrinityNH.org

Our web site gives a variety of information about the church and is up-to-date for church information. Each Sunday's bulletin and prayer requests are posted so that if you miss a service, you can still get them. There is updated information on our ministries for events and schedules and you can download sermons and other resources. We also have a membership directory that you can access.

2. Listserv Email Communication

Trinity also has a listserv for the Trinity family to keep in touch with prayer requests, important pastor and staff announcements, needs and others helpful items. The listserv is a free church family email system in which a person sends an email to our listserv address and that email then gets sent out to all the people on the listserv. It's highly recommended for all people to be on the listserv (husbands and wives with different email addresses are encouraged to both sign up). The number of emails that get sent are normally very little. This becomes an important way to keep connected. To sign up to be on the listserv, send a request to community@Trinitynh.org with "Subscribe" in the subject line.

3. Prayer Requests

Each week, we publish in the Sunday bulletin a list of current prayer requests for the Trinity family to be praying for. To put a request on the prayer list, you can fill out your request on a CARE Card at church, call the church office or email the church office by Wednesday noon. If you just want the staff to pray for the prayer request, you can mark the box on the card and the request will not be put on the prayer sheet, but will be shared with the staff to pray for.

People also use the listserv to communicate prayer requests, especially emergency ones.

4. Bulletin Announcements

Announcements for the Sunday bulletin must be turned in or emailed to the church office by Wednesday noon. They are published as space allows. We normally do not make announcements during the worship service unless they are in the bulletin ahead of time.

5. Photo Release Form

We want to make sure that all pictures used in our newsletter, on the web site and in other ways have the permission of parents and individuals. We have a Photo Release form that gives the church different levels of permission to use pictures of themselves or their families. Permission can be changed or rescinded at any time a person desires.

B. Giving and Budgets

Stewardship is important for Christians to practice, and it is also important for churches to practice. Money given to Trinity is treated as God's money, and under the direction of the Trustee Board. This means we carefully develop our budget and seek to use the money given

by our church family in a way that honors God and accomplishes his purposes and ministries through Trinity. Like most churches, Trinity is a non-profit, charitable organization, and all money given to Trinity is tax deductible.

1. Budget

Each year the Trustee Board develops a budget to allocate money according to the needs of ministries, the vision of the church and as God guides and directs. After much prayer and reworking, the budget is approved by the Elders and distributed to the church. We use what's called a general budget, where people give to Trinity and the money is then distributed according to the general budget. The Fiscal Year runs from July 1 through June 30. The current budget is in Appendix K.

2. Designated Funds

Besides the general budget, we have a few designated funds to which people can give as God guides them. People should give to a designated fund above their regular giving to the general fund. The main designated funds are the Elder Fund, Building Fund, Memorial Fund, Short-term Missions Trips and Youth Intern. Designated funds are approved by the Trustee Board when there is a special need beyond what the general fund provides. Money given to any fund that is not an approved designated fund will be treated as an offering to the general budget. To give to any of the designated funds, you can use a giving envelope and designate the fund and amount of the gift.

3. Giving Details

God carries out his purposes through the time, talents and money of Christians. Giving to God's work is an important act of the Lordship of Christ in a person's life and personal stewardship. The Bible teaches that each Christian is to give to the Lord a portion of their income as a way of acknowledging God's ownership of all of one's life, including one's money. We don't take an offering in church, but have offering boxes located in the church lobby and auditorium for people to put their offerings into.

There are different ways to give:

a. Giving Envelopes

We use giving envelopes at Trinity to make it easier to keep records and to provide a copy of people's giving for I.R.S. requirements. Giving envelopes are distributed in December to current members and attenders at Trinity, and can be picked up any time through the year by requesting a set of envelopes by calling the church office or by using the CARE Card and asking for one.

b. Bank Deductions and Electronic Fund Transfers

People are finding that giving by electronic fund transfer or payroll deduction is an easy way to designate an amount that comes automatically from their place of work or from their bank. If you would like to have your giving automatically deducted from your checking or savings account, you can fill out the form in Appendix I and return it to the finance secretary, the treasurer or put it in the offering box at church.

c. Cash

If you are giving by cash and want a tax receipt, make sure you put it in a giving envelope with your name on it.

d. Stocks, Bonds and other Annuities

People can give stocks, bonds, and other types of gifts. The church will then give you a receipt for your tax records.

e. Non-cash Gifts

People may also give non-cash gifts, such as computers, video projectors, cars, etc., but it is best to first check with someone on the Trustee Board or a pastor to see if the item is wanted by the church. If the Trustee Board approves the donation, the church will give the person a letter acknowledging the receipt of the gift for their tax records.

The Financial Secretary keeps a record of each person's giving (when done by envelope or check) and sends a record of their giving twice a year, in January and in July. This gives a person a record to help them for I.R.S. purposes.

4. *The Mission Building Project*

In the fall of 2007, we embarked on a project to enable us to minister better by increasing the facilities. We have built Phase 1 of the project (the kitchen, lobby and bathrooms, and part of the old roof). We have raised and continue to raise money for this project through our church family by asking our people to make a three-year commitment to give toward the project above their normal giving to the church. Our goal is to pay off our loan that we took out to help pay for the cost. We have a special "Close the Gap" emphasis to help pay this off. Currently, we owe \$_____ to completely pay off the loan. We encourage each new member of Trinity to join all the rest of us in this project.

IX. THE NEXT STEP

After you have completed CLASS 101 and made the commitments to build your Christian foundation, what should you do now?

Go on to second base with CLASS 201:

"How to Develop Spiritual Maturity."