

CSI Constitutional Document

TRINITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL POSITION ON DENOMINATIONAL ISSUES INCLUDING DOCTRINE AND TRADITIONS

A. HISTORY

After the efforts to grow Alliance Christian School (ACS) “out of the basement and into a high school” failed, it was judged that a main cause for that failure was the misperception by the community that ACS was not a true interdenominational school although we believe it truly was. The bylaws which governed ACS stipulated that the majority of the board had to be Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) members, the CMA pastor was an ex-officio member of the board, and the statement of faith was theologically aligned with CMA. The ACS board then commissioned two departing members to work on getting enough momentum to start an independent middle and high school. The charge was to include all segments of the Christ-believing community in a true interdenominational effort to fill the vacuum left by closing the St. Francis High School and the inability of any other Christian elementary school in the area to have a traditional high school.

From the beginning it was recognized that the middle and high school (hereby referred to as “high school”) had to be a community effort that was fully inclusive. So, from the beginning, the stage was set to concentrate on what united the believers and to leave the divisive issues to the churches and families to sort out and teach on. For this reason, the initial steering committee included people from all kinds of denominations: Baptist, Alliance, Nazarene, Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of God, Church of Christ, etc. Even the development director of St. Francis (Mark Guiliani) was with the group until he and his family moved out of the area. The founding members had similar representation with a member who had served on the St. Francis Board (Rick Vaglianti).

Recognizing the need for a spiritual advisory board that is inclusive too, and recognizing the reluctance of the Roman Catholic Church to work with a school they perceived as “Protestant” (coming out of ACS), the structure of the Spiritual Advisory Board originally mandated the presence of a Catholic priest as one of the 7 pastors. The Roman Catholic church, as of February 2008 has declined to fill that position. Therefore at the writing of this document, the Spiritual Advisory Board has not included a Catholic priest, although such participation would be welcome in accordance with the statement of faith, mission, purpose and vision of TCS and the Spiritual Board which are included in this document.

As Trinity High School started growing into a true interdenominational but unapologetically Christian school, many people started to experience firsthand the blessing God has ordained through such a vision.

Unfortunately, there were people on both sides of the spectrum still unhappy with Trinity’s interdenominational position. To some Catholics, Trinity was too Protestant,

and to some Protestants, Trinity was too Catholic. To some liberals, Trinity was too conservative, and to some conservatives, Trinity was too liberal. Had Trinity been a church, they would all have been right. One cannot be a part of a church that does not reflect one's theological convictions and tradition. Trinity though is not a church. It is a school dedicated to enabling Christ-like living for all who trust Him.

Then Jesus' spiritual position was questioned, He replied, the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me. (Matt 11: 5-6).

Trinity, while striving to be Christ-like, can say to all the doubters: the students are excelling academically, in extracurricular activities, and above all spiritually. People's lives are being changed (parents, students, staff, volunteers and leaders). And together we are growing into an interdenominational Christian school community which we believe is where God has called us to be. Together we strive to share that blessing with the community at large (our churches, greater Morgantown, the US and the world). To the best of our knowledge, there has not been one person change from one denomination to the other due to Trinity's influence but there have been a lot of lives blessed. So, what made Trinity so available to God's work resulting in such blessings?

B. VISION

Trinity Christian School is an interdenominational institution committed to providing a life changing education resulting in a Christ-centered world view...“so they may have life and have it more abundantly.” (*John10:10*)

C. MISSION

Trinity Christian School's mission is to help accomplish God's purpose in the lives of students, teachers, staff, and parents as disciples of Jesus Christ, resulting in a positive influence on our community, our nation, and the world.

*EDUCATING FOR LIFE
MORE THAN JUST AN EDUCATION
TO EQUIP, NOT TO MERELY SHELTER*

D. STATEMENT OF FAITH

(Based on the Nicene Creed – which predates any major Church splits)

- 1) We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.
- 2) We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through Him all things

were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

- 3) We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.
- 4) We believe all Scripture is able to instruct us for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:15,16) Therefore we believe in the Bible as the sole rule and guide for Christian faith and practice and for spiritual matters within the school.
- 5) We believe in one holy and universal church comprised of those who have placed their faith in Christ.
- 6) We believe in the Gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

E. INTERDENOMINATIONAL POSITION:

Romans Chapter 14

1. Trinity recognizes the difficulty of either using any Bible version or picking one version for all Biblical references within the school. Due to the presence of a number of books in the Bible of some denominations (known to some as the “Apocrypha” and to others as the “Deuterocanonicals”), Trinity has chosen to use a version that has only the books common to all the Christ believing churches (Protestants, Catholic, Orthodox, etc.). The NIV was chosen more for scholarly reasons than religious ones. Students who come from a denomination that uses a different version are encouraged to continue to use “their Bible” at home and in church, but for school purposes use the NIV for unity and uniformity of the curriculum.
2. Trinity recognizes that some churches and denominations use tradition in addition to the Bible as final authority. Trinity will not teach that such practices are right or wrong, but rather refer its constituents back to their church, clergy, family, and to the Bible.

However, within the school walls, Trinity will recognize the Bible as the only common denominational authority (as stated in the Statement of Faith).

3. For questions from students, all other denominational issues will be dealt with in a similar fashion, i.e.:
 - a. No teacher or staff at Trinity will be allowed to endorse or condemn one of these positions.
 - b. Objective discussions are always allowed at Trinity (about any topic, this one being no exception).
 - c. If a debate arises, Trinity personnel are expected to:
 - i. Redirect any potentially divisive discussion to the common denomination of our faith which is to surrender our life to Christ; live for Him with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul and all our strength; and to love and serve humanity as He commands.
 - ii. Sometimes give relevant Biblical references (without personal commentary) as long as the references are comprehensive, objective and complete. Staff should encourage the student to research the question themselves using the Bible as the infallible word of God.
 - iii. Refer the issue back to the person's church, pastor/priest and family.

This policy does not forbid appropriate (not potentially divisive) discussion in the classroom of issues that are reasonable for consideration in a Christian school setting but should be clearly understood to mean that TCS does not endorse a particular position with regard to matters of doctrine or church tradition that differ between Christian church groups.

- d. As an illustration of these denominational issues we give the following examples: (this is not an exhaustive list)
 - Allowance of women to speak, teach or preach or hold positions of authority in church
 - Allowance of musical instruments in worship in church
 - Styles of worship in church
 - Best translation of the Bible
 - Modes and age of Baptism
 - End time signs or date predictions
 - Are there operating today active gifts of the Spirit (e.g. speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, gift of prophecy, healing, miracles)?
 - The sacraments

- Heavenly position of Mary
- Trans-substantiation, con-substantiation, etc.
- Allowance of statues or the cross in church or worn as jewelry.
- Difference in styles of observing communion
- All things predestined versus free will
- Permission of remarrying after divorce
- Assurance of salvation
- What is meant by baptism of the Holy Spirit?
- What is an apostle, are there any today (as opposed to “Apostle”)?
- Is cremation acceptable for Christians?
- Is it acceptable for Christians to join the military?
- Is it acceptable for Christians to drink alcoholic beverages?

CLARIFICATION PROCEDURE

Trinity recognizes the challenges involved in being a true unapologetically Christian, interdenominational school. Because of that, the above explanation may prove inadequate to some, especially when listing examples that cannot be exhaustive. So, we ask everyone to exercise grace rather than legalism in reviewing our above stated position on denominational issues. Feel free to ask for clarification when necessary. The procedure for clarification is straightforward:

- a. Anyone can ask for clarification. One doesn't have to be affiliated with the school or even be a CSI member.
- b. There is only one procedure to follow in to honor God's command to keep the harmony in His body while showing each other love and grace.
- c. The procedure involves calling the administrative assistant and asking for the proper form to fill out and submit to the appropriate board committee (MAPP).
- d. The MAPP committee (in consultation with other committees and boards, as needed) will review the question and present it to the Board of Directors for a response within 60 days of the date of submission.
- e. This procedure is not intended to change any aspect of this document.

In closing, Trinity (CSI) stands firm on the interdenominational position to which we have been called by the Lord. This is not an educational model acceptable to all believers and in love we must say Trinity may not be the best fit for every family. Newcomers to Trinity should not accept this truly non-denominational position with the intention to change it in the future into a position more acceptable to them. Such approach will prove counterproductive as there is no mechanism available to do that.

The CSI Board of Directors, Spiritual Advisory Board and all of the CSI membership are hereby charged with guarding this vision, not changing it.