

WHAT IS TRINITY ASSEMBLY & FELLOWSHIP?

It was more than twenty years ago while in the desert of Niger that the question first lodged like a burr under our saddle, namely, “What does the church look like among the nomadic Wodaabe people for whom we are here as a ‘church planters’ ”? That question in various forms has continued with us through the years and searchings, the failures and discoveries, the joys and sadness. Like the Apostle Paul to the Philippians, we cannot say that “we have obtained” or already “been perfected” in our understanding of the answer. However, we have gained some insights that find application not only for unreached desert nomads but also for ‘first world’ peoples and environments.

Perhaps the best way to describe **TRINITY ASSEMBLY & FELLOWSHIP** is to unpack these three words.

TRINITY

Trinity Assembly & Fellowship (TA&F) names the Trinity first and foremost because it is the revelation of God Himself to man, in and through the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ revealed the astonishing reality that God is not only One, but Triune. The Father-Son-Spirit relationship and our own intimate inclusion and participation in that relationship is core revelation in the New Testament. Sadly, this has been largely neglected by much of the professing church.

We name the Trinity first also because of the guiding influence this revelation provides to us doctrinally, not least of which is in the arena of election. Historically, the Church has been forced to assume one of two positions doctrinally in relation to election, namely Calvinism or Arminianism; that is to say, the “sovereignty of God” or the “free will of man”. TA&F seeks rather to articulate this glorious doctrine from what we believe to be the higher ground of the revelation of the Father-Son-Holy Spirit’s eternal being and relationship.

In saying this, TA&F utterly rejects and repudiates from ourselves the frequently applied labels of “neo-orthodoxy” and/or “universalism” that sadly are not unwarranted accusations among a growing number of shallow “Trinitarian” and “Perichoresis” admirers. We believe that Hell, as the biblical lake of fire, is real and eternal and that many in this Christ rejecting world will find themselves there at the end of the ages.

In naming the Trinity, TA&F stands on the shoulders of the early Church Fathers and affirms their correct views related to the Incarnation of the Son of God. We also affirm the early Church’s creedal statements of Nicaea and Chalcedon as historical, succinct and orthodox articulation of the Trinity and the Christological nature of Jesus Christ the God-Man. We also acknowledge elements of our Christian heritage and spiritual disciplines discovered and preserved by some of the Desert Fathers.

ASSEMBLY

We utilize the name “assembly” to unashamedly locate ourselves doctrinally, in three key areas, with that portion of the true Church which has historically held the same position.

First, we are dispensational and believe that it is biblically revealed that God has allotted seven distinct ages each with distinctive administrative principles in which man is held responsible as a steward during that time. While stewardship and responsibility are different in each and every dispensation, man is always saved only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. This makes for a clear distinction between Israel and the Church which we affirm, while we repudiate replacement theology and all forms of anti-Semitism. We are currently in the dispensation of Grace.

Second, we are pre-tribulational and pre-millennial in our eschatological belief. That is we believe in the imminent return of Jesus Christ to resurrect the dead in Christ and to rapture the true Church out of this world before the seven year tribulation period of God’s wrath upon a Christ rejecting world and

WHAT IS TRINITY ASSEMBLY & FELLOWSHIP?

godless professing church. At the end of the tribulation we believe Jesus Christ will then personally and visibly return with His Church-Bride and establish His 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom reign on earth from Jerusalem and will fulfil all the as yet unfulfilled prophecies made to Israel.

Third, we believe that each dispensation has and will end in failure as regards man's responsibility on earth. The age of grace is no exception. Jesus said He would build His Church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it, meaning that neither sin nor Satan would ultimately keep Jesus from calling out (ecclesia) and safely securing to Himself the full and composite number of born again believers from the Day of Pentecost to the translation of the Church to heaven at the rapture. This does not mean however that the visible professing church on earth will not fail or did not fall into ruin. The trajectory of the professing church as described in Matthew 13 in the parables of Wheat and Tares, Mustard Seed and Leaven will end in utter apostasy and the full blown rejection of Jesus as the Apostles Paul and Peter clearly teach. Further, the dispensational failure of the church on earth, not in heaven, is clearly seen in its failure to continue to display the glory of Jesus Christ in unity in the world. In the failure of previous dispensations, after man had failed in his responsibilities, God never recovered nor restored that loss but rather brought in a new dispensational age and stewardship for man. In applying this to our day, we do not believe that it is God's will for us, in our current stewardship, to reform denominations or attempt to restore the universal unity of the Body of Christ. Neither do we feel it to be our stewardship to assume the name Church in an effort to "start from scratch" and try to create again the one, true, universally united church on the earth.

We do believe that it is God's will for us to recognize and own the failure and to continue to trust in His Spirit and Word to shepherd us in our current state as we assemble ourselves together as those called out (ecclesia) and united by the Spirit to Jesus Christ as Head and we as members of His Body. TA&F is a visible and knowable assembly who believe that where two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, He is in their midst. It is also an assembly called out and separate from unequal yokes with unbelievers; separate from iniquity in the world, the flesh and the devil and other "vessels of dishonour", while pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

There are two additional documents that I encourage you to consider in clarifying the principle activities of this dispensation that have been expressed here under "assembly" in condensed form:

- ["On the Formation of Churches"](#) - John Nelson Darby; 1840
- ["The Public Ruin of the Church"](#) – John Nelson Darby; 1847

FELLOWSHIP

TA&F takes the name fellowship to reflect two distinct meanings and commitments. First, our fellowship refers to our continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, that is to say the Bible. We believe in the literal interpretation of the Bible in its 66 books as the sole God breathed, authority and canon for our life and doctrine. In the Book of Acts the Apostles' doctrine is linked to fellowship with them, and later the Apostle John clearly informs us that fellowship with the Apostles and their doctrine is centred in the fellowship of the Father and the Son. We now come full circle back to the Trinity. TA&F is committed to being in the Word of God, the Bible, so that we might enjoy being in the Word of God, that is the Son's communion with the Father by the Spirit. This fellowship keeps us ready in spirit, by the washing with water through the word, as we look for his coming again.

The second distinct meaning reflects our fellowship together as believers and is expressed particularly in the context of and sacramental participation in the Body and Blood of Christ through the Bread and

WHAT IS TRINITY ASSEMBLY & FELLOWSHIP?

Wine of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper, Communion). In the Book of Acts this is described as the "breaking of the loaf" and is coupled with "the prayers". This indicates more than simply praying, though that is clearly implied. The definite article indicates something specific and the noun is plural, meaning more than one prayer. What the specific prayers were is not stated but would seem to indicate a known liturgical element associated with the breaking of the bread. As such, TA&F participates in the "breaking of the loaf and the prayers" on a weekly basis.

Whilst this inaugural description of TA&F is not intended to be a comprehensive doctrinal statement, it does seem important to articulate the particular emphasis described above by the three words Trinity Assembly & Fellowship. However, it also seems important to affirm our commitment to the Bible's clear teaching in a few other areas which are increasingly being ignored by the professing church.

In spite of the political incorrectness and the media's recent scapegoating of Christians for the current level of domestic violence against women, TA&F nevertheless affirms and upholds the biblical teaching on what has been called complementarianism. That is the clearly distinct yet complimentary roles of men and women as husband and wives. In the assembly, this finds particular application in the Apostle Paul's injunction against a woman teaching or having authority over a man. The Greek construction in 1 Tim. 2:12 suggests that in the assembly women are not to be in a "state" or have the "status" as teacher or to exercise a self-assured, self-confident dominion over men. Rather, women are to participate and contribute with a tranquil and peaceable disposition.

Another politically incorrect position which TA&F unashamedly holds is in the arena of marriage and sexuality. We believe and teach what the Bible clearly teaches, namely that same sex marriage, all forms of homosexual activity and heterosexual fornication and adultery are sinful, improper for God's people and for such things the wrath of God is coming (Col. 3:5-6).

Lastly, in an age where "social justice" and "inclusion" have become the prioritized focus of many churches, we believe that our priorities remain threefold: 1) Glorify God 2) Proclaim the Gospel, making disciples and 3) Equip the saints for works of service. Ministering to human need happens in the context of these priorities.

IS TA&F A CHURCH?

We are not "starting a church", but we are deliberately seeking to "be what we are", as members of the Body of Christ, His Church, in a more clearly visible and definable way.

TA&F hopes to make it more readily accessible for others wishing to "cross over" to take greater possession of their inheritance. Specifically, to demonstrate in life and doctrine, an alternative for those who may sense the leavening process around them but have no idea what to do. Equally, we desire to be an assembly where new believers can find their bearings and become disciples of Jesus Christ.

The early Church in Acts 2:42-48 provides us with a description, not a prescription, of elements of Spirit directed corporate life that we anticipate and prioritize as they did. Similarly, we believe the Christ given gifts, their use and results as described in Ephesian 4:11-16 are anticipated in our gatherings.

Sunday morning and mid-week gatherings are focused on the Word and Sacrament for edification, equipping, discipleship and worship.

WHAT IS TRINITY ASSEMBLY & FELLOWSHIP?

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Apart from the global signs that the time is fast approaching when this world is going to be plunged into unimaginable suffering, the more local “anti-Christ” agenda is picking up momentum. The spirit of the age and fear of speaking the truth is silencing many pulpits to the point where compromise is now the new orthodoxy.

It was the late Dr J. Vernon McGee said many years ago: “The Church began in the home and will likely end in the home”.

Trinity Assembly & Fellowship echoes this sentiment and seeks to reproduce itself on the same ground.