

THE PROXIMITY FELLOWSHIP

CHARTER

A Framework for Christian Fellowship

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proximityfellowship.org

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A Word Before You Begin

You do not need to master this Charter before gathering. The Proximity Fellowship Quick Starter is enough to help a small fellowship begin. This Charter is here for the moments when a question becomes more serious, responsibility grows, or a fellowship needs to know what the Framework actually requires, recommends, or leaves to local discernment.

The Charter is the constitutional text of the Proximity Fellowship Framework. It establishes a common Christian foundation, a small number of requirements that protect the identity and integrity of the Framework, guidance for healthy fellowship, and substantial room for local Christian freedom.

It does not attempt to provide a rule for every circumstance. Where the Framework leaves a matter open, Christians should remain free to exercise prayer, wisdom, conscience, love, humility, and mature responsibility together. A document can provide structure and safeguards. It cannot live the Christian life on behalf of those who use it.

No provision in this Charter replaces the headship of Christ or the authority of Scripture. The Framework is a human instrument. It should be examined in light of Scripture and used in service of Christian fellowship, never treated as an object of allegiance in itself.

Proximity Fellowship is offered to Christians from different traditions who can gather in good faith within this common framework. Differences do not need to disappear before fellowship can begin. At the same time, freedom within the Framework does not mean the absence of boundaries. What is required should be clear. What is recommended should remain recommendation. What is genuinely left open should remain open.

Read this Charter as your circumstances require. Return to it when questions arise. Where its language proves unclear, incomplete, or unwise, it should remain open to careful correction. The purpose is not to make the Framework larger. The purpose is to help Christians gather faithfully under Christ.

Comprehensive in what it must address. Restrained in what it must prescribe.

Clear enough to guide. Simple enough to live.

Preamble: The Spirit of the Framework

Proximity Fellowship begins with a simple conviction. Christians should be able to draw near to Christ and to one another without unnecessary barriers.

The Christian faith is not the possession of a denomination, institution, ministry, theological school, personality, or generation. Christ is the Head of His Church, and Scripture is the norm for Christian faith and life. Proximity Fellowship therefore does not claim to stand between Christ and His people. It offers a Framework intended to serve Christians as they gather together.

Christians come from different traditions, cultures, histories, and forms of church life. Those differences do not need to disappear before fellowship can begin. Proximity seeks sufficient common ground for Christians to pray, open Scripture, encourage one another, bear one another's burdens, and grow in faithfulness to Christ. It does not require agreement on every secondary question.

At the same time, unity does not mean that every belief or practice must be treated as equally consistent with the Framework. Some convictions belong to the common Christian foundation. A small number of additional boundaries protect the identity, integrity, and safety of the Framework. Beyond those boundaries, substantial room remains for Christian conviction, local responsibility, and different forms of faithful practice.

This Charter is intentionally limited. It cannot anticipate every circumstance, and it should not attempt to do so. Christians who gather through Proximity remain responsible for exercising prayer, wisdom, discernment, conscience, humility, love, forgiveness, and mature judgment. A Framework can provide common ground, guidance, and safeguards. It cannot carry the responsibilities of Christian life on behalf of the people who use it.

Where the Charter establishes a boundary, that boundary should be clear enough to be understood and honored. Where it offers guidance, guidance should not quietly become law. Where it leaves a matter open, local Christians should not manufacture unnecessary requirements merely because one practice is familiar to them. Simplicity is not the absence of conviction. It is the discipline of requiring only what is genuinely necessary.

Strong conviction should never become a reason for contempt, manipulation, or personal control. Christians may disagree seriously and still owe one another dignity, truthfulness, patience, and charity. No Host, teacher, elder, steward, initiator, or other person owns another Christian's conscience or faith. Responsibility may be entrusted to people, but no human being should become indispensable.

Proximity Fellowship also recognizes its own limits. It is an imperfect Framework offered by imperfect Christians. Its provisions may need clarification or correction as experience reveals weaknesses or as better understanding develops. Such correction should be careful rather than restless. Development should not be assumed to require more rules, more procedures, or more institutional weight.

The Framework is a means, not an end. Its purpose is fulfilled when it helps Christians gather faithfully under Christ and draw nearer to Him and to one another. If a fellowship becomes healthy enough that it no longer needs the Framework, that need not be treated as failure. The fellowship is the purpose. The Framework is the means.

This Charter should be read in that spirit. What is essential should remain clear. What is guidance should remain guidance. What is genuinely open should remain open. Wherever the Framework serves Christian fellowship without drawing attention away from Christ, it is doing its proper work.

Christ is the Head. Scripture is the norm. No human being is indispensable.

How This Charter Works

This Charter speaks with different levels of authority. To use it faithfully, readers should distinguish what Proximity confesses, what every Proximity Fellowship must respect, what the Framework recommends, and what remains entrusted to local Christian discernment. These four layers give the Charter its structure.

1. Foundational Christian Confession

This is the common Christian foundation of Proximity Fellowship. It identifies the historic Christian faith within which the Framework understands itself and gathers. It is a common floor, not a complete system of theology.

2. Constitutional Requirements

These are the small number of provisions that a gathering must respect if it publicly identifies as a Proximity Fellowship. They protect the identity, integrity, safety, and truthful use of the Framework. A local preference or majority decision cannot set aside a Constitutional Requirement.

3. Framework Principles and Guidance

These provisions offer serious counsel for healthy Christian fellowship. They express the direction and wisdom of the Framework without becoming hidden law. Local fellowships should receive them thoughtfully and apply them with judgment appropriate to their circumstances.

4. Local Christian Freedom

Matters genuinely left open by the Charter belong to local Christian discernment. Participants may address them according to Scripture, conscience, Christian conviction, prayer, wisdom, their circumstances, and applicable law. Local freedom remains subject to the Constitutional Requirements and to the dignity and safety of others.

Reading the Charter

When a question arises, these distinctions should remain visible. A recommendation should not become a requirement through habit or influence. A local custom should not be treated as universal merely because it works well in one fellowship. Where the Charter leaves room, that room should remain real. Where it establishes a boundary, that boundary should be honored plainly.

The purpose of these distinctions is practical. A fellowship should be able to know what it must hold, what it should take seriously, and where it may decide for itself.

PART I

Foundational Christian Confession

Proximity Fellowship begins with the Christian faith itself. This Part states the common confession within which the Framework gathers and identifies the historic Protestant Christian tradition in which the Framework is anchored. It remains intentionally concise, sufficient for a shared Christian foundation without becoming a complete system of theology.

Article 1. The Common Christian Foundation

1.1 The Historic Christian Faith

Proximity Fellowship is grounded in the historic Christian faith confessed by the apostles and received by the Church through the centuries. The Framework does not ask Christians to abandon their churches, traditions, or theological schools in order to gather through it.

The Framework asks for a genuine common confession. This confession provides sufficient Christian ground for Participants to recognize one another as fellow believers in Christ and to gather together in good faith.

1.2 One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Proximity confesses one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, holy and righteous, loving and merciful, and worthy of worship, trust, and obedience.

The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Proximity receives this confession within the historic Christian faith in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit gives life, dwells in God's people, and works in and through the Church.

1.3 Jesus Christ, Truly God and Truly Human

Proximity confesses Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Lord, truly God and truly human. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived without sin and proclaimed the kingdom of God.

He is Lord, and Christian fellowship within Proximity is centered upon Him.

1.4 His Death and Bodily Resurrection

Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sins, was buried, and rose bodily from the dead. His death and resurrection stand at the heart of the gospel and of the Christian hope.

He ascended into heaven and reigns as Lord. He will come again, the dead will be raised, and God will judge with righteousness. The hope of everlasting life rests in Christ and in the promises of God.

1.5 Salvation by Grace Through Faith in Christ

Human beings are created by God in His image and therefore possess inherent dignity and worth. Humanity is also fallen in sin and cannot be reconciled to God by human merit or achievement.

Salvation is the gracious work of God through Jesus Christ and is received through faith in Him. Those who belong to Christ are called to repentance, obedience, holiness, love, and good works as the fruit of grace, not as a means of earning God's acceptance.

Proximity does not require one denominational explanation of every question concerning the order or manner of salvation. The gospel of Jesus Christ belongs to the common foundation of Proximity Fellowship.

1.6 Holy Scripture as the Authoritative Written Norm

Proximity receives the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the authoritative written norm for Christian faith and life. Scripture is received for teaching, correction, discernment, and faithful living.

The Charter, the Framework, ProximityFellowship.org, traditions, teachers, resources, and local practices remain human instruments. None stands above Scripture, and no human formulation within Proximity should be treated as infallible.

Scripture is the norm.

1.7 Historic Protestant Christian Tradition and the Canon of Scripture

Within this common Christian foundation, Proximity Fellowship is anchored in the historic Protestant Christian tradition. This describes the theological location of the Framework, including its understanding of the canon of Holy Scripture. It does not require every Participant to belong to a Protestant denomination or to leave another Christian tradition.

For the purposes of the Proximity Framework, the biblical canon consists of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament commonly received within historic Protestant Christianity. The books commonly called Deuterocanonical or Apocryphal are not received as part of the biblical canon within Proximity. They are not used by the Framework as Scripture for establishing doctrine, Constitutional Requirements, or normative Christian teaching.

Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and other Christians may participate in good faith where they can affirm the common Christian foundation and respect the constitutional character of the Framework. Proximity therefore seeks to practice ecumenical hospitality with theological clarity about the tradition in which the Framework is anchored.

1.8 The Church Belongs to Christ

Proximity confesses that the Church belongs to Jesus Christ. Those who belong to Christ are His people and His body, called to worship God, hear Scripture, pray, encourage one another, serve one another, bear witness to the gospel, and live together in love.

The Church is not the possession of Proximity Fellowship, ProximityFellowship.org, any denomination, ministry, leader, network, or human institution. Proximity exists to serve Christian fellowship. It does not claim ownership of Christ's Church.

1.9 A Common Floor, Not a Complete Theology

The common Christian confession stated in this Article is deliberately sufficient rather than exhaustive. Proximity's historic Protestant orientation identifies the theological and canonical location of the Framework without making every Protestant doctrine or denominational distinctiveness a condition of participation.

The Charter does not attempt to settle every question concerning baptism, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, church government, liturgical form, predestination, the detailed order of salvation, creation models, theories of atonement, or the timing and manner of events surrounding Christ's return. Where the Charter leaves such matters open, Christians may hold and discuss their convictions with humility, conscience, prayer, and responsible attention to Scripture.

The absence of a subject from this Foundational Christian Confession does not mean that the Framework has no constitutional boundary concerning it. Part II establishes the Constitutional Requirements that govern the public practice and integrity of a Proximity Fellowship.

A Participant should be able to affirm the common Christian foundation in good faith and respect the Framework's stated constitutional boundaries and Protestant orientation. Beyond these, differences may remain wherever the Charter leaves them open.

PART II

Constitutional Requirements

This Part states the limited requirements that preserve the identity, integrity, safety, and public meaning of the Proximity Fellowship Framework. These requirements are deliberately few. They establish necessary boundaries while leaving substantial room for guidance, conscience, and local Christian responsibility.

Article 2. Name, Nature, and Purpose

2.1 The Name Proximity Fellowship

The name Proximity Fellowship identifies the Framework described by this Charter and local gatherings that use it in good faith. A local gathering may publicly identify as a Proximity Fellowship when it accepts the Foundational Christian Confession and the Constitutional Requirements established here.

Use of the name expresses a relationship to the Framework. It does not transfer ownership of a local gathering to ProximityFellowship.org, nor does it transfer ordinary local responsibility away from the Participants who actually live the fellowship.

2.2 A Framework for Christian Fellowship

Proximity Fellowship is a framework for Christians who desire to gather in ordinary places and circumstances around Jesus Christ. It provides common ground, practical guidance, safeguards, and room for responsible local life without requiring one denominational pattern for every fellowship.

A Proximity Fellowship may be small or larger, temporary or continuing, simple or more developed according to its circumstances. Participation in the Framework may exist alongside participation in a church, parish, congregation, denomination, ministry, or other Christian community.

2.3 Not a Denomination or Centralized Church Authority

Proximity Fellowship does not constitute a denomination, hierarchy, bishopric, or centralized ecclesiastical government. ProximityFellowship.org does not claim universal jurisdiction over local fellowships and does not stand between Christ and His people.

The Framework does not require every local gathering to describe itself as a church. It also does not forbid Participants from understanding their shared life as a church according to their convictions concerning Scripture and Christian tradition. The fellowship belongs to Christ, and the Framework does not claim authority to settle every ecclesiological question for every Christian tradition.

2.4 The Purpose of the Framework

The purpose of Proximity Fellowship is to make faithful Christian fellowship more possible and more accessible. It offers a sufficiently clear framework through which Christians may gather, pray, hear and consider Scripture, worship God, encourage one another, share Christian life, serve one another, and grow together in faith, hope, love, and obedience to Christ.

This purpose is especially relevant where Christians seek fellowship in places or circumstances that do not readily fit an existing congregational pattern. The Framework remains equally available to Christians who are already connected to established churches and wish to cultivate additional ordinary fellowship without transferring their allegiance to Proximity.

2.5 Fellowship as the Purpose, the Framework as the Means

Proximity exists to serve Christian fellowship. Its value is measured by whether it helps Christians draw nearer to Christ and to one another with faithfulness, love, and responsibility. Size, visibility, institutional permanence, and dependence upon the Proximity name are not measures of spiritual success.

A local fellowship may change form, join another Christian community, cease using the Proximity name, or reach a maturity in which the Framework is no longer useful to it. Such developments need not be treated as failure. The fellowship is the purpose. The Framework is the means.

2.6 Voluntary Participation

Proximity Fellowship is offered freely. No Christian is required to join, remain in, or identify with the Framework. A person may participate while retaining an existing denominational, ecclesial, or theological identity, provided that participation remains consistent with this Charter.

Participation does not create personal allegiance to a Host, steward, initiator, teacher, or ProximityFellowship.org. A Participant or local fellowship remains free to step away from the Framework without being treated as spiritually disloyal merely for doing so.

2.7 Simplicity and Sufficiency

The Framework should remain as simple as possible and as detailed as necessary. It should address what genuinely requires common clarity, constitutional protection, or practical guidance while resisting the unnecessary multiplication of doctrines, rules, procedures, titles, and institutional requirements.

Simplicity does not mean neglect. The Framework should be comprehensive in what it must address, restrained in what it must prescribe, clear enough to guide, and simple enough to live.

No Charter can anticipate every circumstance or carry the responsibilities of Christian life on behalf of those who use it. Proximity therefore provides sufficient common ground, boundaries, guidance, and safeguards while leaving Christians responsible to exercise prayer, wisdom, discernment, love, forgiveness, humility, conscience, and mature responsibility under the headship of Christ.

Development should not be assumed to require expansion. New requirements should be introduced only where genuine necessity, clearer understanding, meaningful safeguarding, or the integrity of the Framework reasonably requires them. What is genuinely open should remain open.

Article 3. Christ, Scripture, and the Limits of Human Authority

3.1 Christ Is the Head

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church. No initiator, Host, elder, deacon, steward, teacher, ministry, denomination, website, or other human authority occupies His place.

Proximity Fellowship exists to serve Christian fellowship under Christ. The Framework may provide common ground, constitutional boundaries, guidance, and safeguards, but it cannot take Christ's place in the life of those who gather through it. Christians remain responsible to seek Him, hear Scripture, pray, discern, love one another, and learn to follow Him together.

3.2 Scripture Is the Norm

Holy Scripture is the authoritative written norm for the Christian foundation, teaching, discernment, and practice of Proximity Fellowship. The Charter, the Framework, its resources, local customs, interpretations, and the words of those who serve within it remain human and subject to Scripture.

No Proximity document, teacher, Host, steward, or other person should be treated as infallible. A constitutional provision may establish what the Framework requires of those who use its name, but it does not become Scripture by doing so. Scripture is the norm by which the Framework itself remains open to examination and correction.

3.3 The Framework Is a Human Instrument

The Proximity Fellowship Framework is an imperfect human instrument offered in service to Christian fellowship. It does not claim to contain every truth, answer every theological question, or provide a rule for every circumstance.

Its provisions should therefore be read according to the four layers explained in this Charter. A recommendation should not quietly become a requirement. An example should not become an unwritten rule. A local custom should not be presented as though it binds every fellowship. Where the Framework needs correction or clarification, that work should be undertaken openly and with appropriate care.

3.4 No Human Being Is Indispensable

No human being should become indispensable to Proximity Fellowship. This applies to the initiator of ProximityFellowship.org and to every Host, elder, deacon, steward, teacher, or other person entrusted with responsibility.

Responsibilities should be capable of being shared, transferred, and, where appropriate, relinquished. A person may serve faithfully for many years without acquiring permanent possession of a role. A local fellowship should be able to continue when a trusted person steps away, and the wider Framework should remain capable of continuing when its present steward is no longer able or willing to serve.

If Proximity becomes healthier in Christ as any particular person becomes less necessary to its continuation, that should be welcomed as a sign of maturity.

3.5 Stewardship, Not Ownership

What is entrusted within Proximity should be treated as something to steward rather than possess. This includes the Framework, the Proximity name, responsibilities, shared resources, finances, information, influence, and opportunities to serve.

A steward may care for what has been entrusted, preserve it, explain it, and make responsible decisions within the limits of that responsibility. Stewardship does not create ownership of local fellowships or of the Christians who participate in them. Significant stewardship should remain accountable and capable of review.

3.6 Christians Are Not Property

No Christian belongs to another Christian as property. No Host, elder, deacon, steward, teacher, initiator, organization, or website may claim ownership of another person's conscience, faith, relationships, participation, or Christian identity.

Participation in Proximity does not create personal allegiance to a human leader. A Participant remains free to ask questions, seek counsel elsewhere, remain connected to another Christian community, decline matters the Charter leaves optional, or leave a Proximity Fellowship. No one should be treated as spiritually disloyal merely for exercising those freedoms in good faith.

3.7 Responsibility Without Domination

Christian fellowship requires real responsibility. Hosts may host. Elders may shepherd according to the convictions of a local fellowship. Teachers may teach. Stewards may protect what has been entrusted to them. Participants may hold one another accountable within appropriate relationships and responsibilities.

Such responsibility is real and bounded. A role does not give unrestricted authority over another person's conscience, relationships, finances, personal life, or standing before Christ. Responsibility should be exercised with humility, truthfulness, proportionality, and accountability. Where power is entrusted, it should serve the good of others and remain open to correction.

The governing orientation remains simple: Christ is the Head. Scripture is the norm. No human being is indispensable.

Article 4. Participants, Dignity, and Freedom of Conscience

4.1 Participants Rather Than Members

Proximity Fellowship does not establish a centralized system of institutional membership. Those who gather within a local fellowship are called Participants. The term describes shared Christian fellowship rather than enrollment into an organization.

Participation does not require a Christian to leave another church, denomination, or Christian community. A Participant may remain fully connected to another Christian tradition or congregation. By itself, participation in Proximity does not transfer ecclesial allegiance to ProximityFellowship.org or to a local Host.

4.2 Who May Participate

Participation is open to Christians who genuinely affirm the Foundational Christian Confession and are willing to gather in good faith within the Constitutional Requirements of this Charter. Christians may come from Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, evangelical, Pentecostal, Reformed, independent, or other Christian traditions. No denominational identity is required merely for participation.

A local fellowship may also welcome visitors, family members, people exploring the Christian faith, and other guests according to its circumstances. Their presence does not change the Christian character or common foundation of the fellowship. The term Participant, as used constitutionally in this Charter, ordinarily refers to a Christian participating in the fellowship in good faith.

4.3 Equal Human Dignity

Every person should be treated with dignity, respect, patience, and reasonable care. Human worth within a fellowship does not rise or fall according to age, sex, ethnicity, nationality, language, education, disability, economic circumstances, marital or family status, theological knowledge, public influence, or role within the gathering.

Some Participants may carry greater responsibility because they host, teach, lead, organize, or serve in particular ways. Greater responsibility does not create greater human worth. No title or function gives a person a higher claim to dignity than another person.

4.4 Voluntary Participation and the Freedom to Leave

Participation in Proximity is voluntary. A Participant may begin participating, pause, step back, or leave without seeking permission from ProximityFellowship.org, a Host, a leader, or the local fellowship.

Participation should never be maintained through fear, threats, shame, manipulation, financial dependence, social pressure, or claims that leaving the fellowship means leaving Christ. A person who leaves should not be treated as spiritually disloyal merely for doing so. Christian relationships may continue freely where the people involved desire them to continue.

4.5 Freedom of Christian Conscience

Participants retain meaningful freedom of Christian conscience in matters this Charter leaves open. No Participant should be pressured to affirm another person's secondary theological position, adopt a denominational practice merely for conformity, imitate another person's spiritual experience, or surrender conscience to a human authority within Proximity.

Freedom of conscience also includes the freedom to hold and express a sincere personal disagreement with a position established by the Framework. Such disagreement should be expressed honestly and respectfully. Where the Charter establishes a Constitutional Requirement governing the public practice of a Proximity Fellowship, personal

disagreement does not require the fellowship to set that boundary aside or present a contrary practice as the position of the Framework.

Conscience should be exercised before God with Scripture, prayer, humility, and regard for others. It does not provide a license to disregard the Foundational Christian Confession, violate Constitutional Requirements, endanger another person, or deliberately make ordinary fellowship impossible.

4.6 Conviction Without Coercion

Christians may hold strong convictions. Proximity does not ask Participants to weaken sincere convictions merely to avoid disagreement. Strong conviction should be expressed without coercion.

No Participant should use spiritual title, claimed revelation, personal influence, financial support, friendship, access to the fellowship, or the language of Scripture as a means of forcing another person into personal allegiance or surrender of conscience. Teaching, counsel, correction, and persuasion may be offered within appropriate relationships. They should leave room for responsible Christian judgment and should remain open to question and correction.

4.7 Good Faith Participation

Good faith participation requires honesty about the foundation and character of the fellowship. Participants should respect the Foundational Christian Confession, honor the Constitutional Requirements that govern the fellowship, treat others with dignity, engage Scripture sincerely, and avoid deliberately misrepresenting or undermining the Framework while using its name.

Good faith does not require agreement on every theological question or local practice. A Participant may ask difficult questions, express disagreement, abstain from an optional practice, and seek change through appropriate conversation. Good faith asks that these freedoms be exercised without deception, contempt, manipulation, or persistent disruption of the fellowship.

4.8 Responsibility Toward One Another

Every Participant shares some responsibility for the health of Christian fellowship. Participants should seek to pray for one another, speak truthfully, encourage one another, bear burdens where reasonably able, practice forgiveness, welcome newcomers, protect the vulnerable, and contribute to peace and mutual edification.

These responsibilities belong to ordinary Christian fellowship and do not require an office or title. They should be lived according to each person's gifts, maturity, ability, and circumstances. No Participant is expected to carry the whole fellowship, and no person should be made indispensable by the dependence of others.

Article 5. Safeguarding, Integrity, and Responsible Conduct

5.1 The Safety and Dignity of Persons

Every Proximity Fellowship should seek to be a place where people are treated with dignity and where reasonable care is taken to protect them from abuse, exploitation, coercion, manipulation, and avoidable harm. Christian trust does not remove the need for ordinary wisdom, appropriate boundaries, and responsible safeguards.

Protecting a person takes priority over preserving appearances, avoiding embarrassment, or protecting the reputation of a Host, leader, local fellowship, or Proximity Fellowship itself. Concerns affecting safety should be taken seriously and handled with appropriate care.

5.2 Children and Young People

Children and young people should be welcomed with care appropriate to their age and circumstances. Parents or legal guardians retain their proper responsibilities, and a local fellowship must respect applicable laws concerning minors.

Where children or young people participate in activities beyond the ordinary presence of their parent or guardian, the fellowship should use reasonable arrangements concerning supervision, communication, transportation, physical spaces, privacy, and other relevant risks. No spiritual role or position within a fellowship gives an adult permission to disregard appropriate boundaries with a child or young person.

5.3 Vulnerable Persons

Particular care should be given where a person's age, disability, illness, grief, isolation, financial dependence, personal crisis, or other circumstances may increase vulnerability. Such circumstances must never be used to obtain money, labor, loyalty, secrecy, sexual access, personal dependence, or spiritual control.

Care for a vulnerable person should strengthen dignity and appropriate freedom. Where needs exceed what a local fellowship can responsibly provide, Participants should be willing to seek suitable family, pastoral, medical, professional, community, or legal assistance as appropriate.

5.4 Abuse, Exploitation, Manipulation, and Coercion

A Proximity Fellowship must not tolerate physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, emotional or psychological abuse, spiritual abuse, financial exploitation, threats, intimidation, deliberate isolation, misuse of confidential information, or comparable serious misuse of trust or authority.

Scripture, prayer, prophecy, spiritual gifts, teaching, counseling, Christian titles, or claims of divine guidance must never be used to justify abuse or to compel another person's submission. A person's desire to belong, receive care, or remain in fellowship must not be turned into leverage over that person's conscience, relationships, finances, body, or personal decisions.

5.5 Personal and Spiritual Boundaries

Healthy Christian fellowship requires appropriate personal and spiritual boundaries. No Participant should be pressured to disclose private matters, receive personal counsel from a particular person, enter a relationship of spiritual dependence, or continue a conversation or activity that is reasonably inappropriate or unsafe.

Confidentiality should be respected with wisdom. It should not be promised or used in a way that conceals abuse, prevents necessary safeguarding action, or obstructs a legal duty to report. Those who teach, counsel, host, or carry trusted responsibility should take particular care not to confuse spiritual service with personal entitlement to another person's private life.

5.6 Serious Misconduct

Credible concerns about serious misconduct should not be minimized merely to preserve harmony or avoid difficulty. Where a concern involves abuse, exploitation, violence, criminal conduct, serious financial wrongdoing, or immediate danger, the response should be proportionate to the seriousness of the matter.

A local fellowship may limit or suspend a person's particular responsibilities or participation when reasonably necessary for protection while a serious concern is being considered. Such action should be taken with fairness and care. Where civil authorities, safeguarding agencies, emergency services, or other appropriate bodies should be involved, internal fellowship processes must not be treated as a substitute for them.

5.7 Applicable Law and Local Responsibility

Each local fellowship is responsible for understanding and complying with the laws and safeguarding obligations that apply to its own activities and location. The Framework cannot provide one legal procedure suitable for every country, jurisdiction, meeting place, or circumstance.

ProximityFellowship.org does not assume the local legal, safeguarding, insurance, financial, or operational responsibilities of a fellowship merely because that fellowship uses the Proximity name or Framework. Where appropriate, Hosts and Participants should seek qualified local guidance rather than relying upon the Charter as a substitute for professional advice.

5.8 Financial Integrity

Money and shared resources must be handled honestly and with appropriate transparency. No Participant should be pressured to give money as a condition of participation, belonging, acceptance, spiritual standing, or access to fellowship.

Funds or property entrusted for a fellowship purpose do not become the personal property of a Host, leader, steward, or other Participant merely because that person receives, stores, administers, or spends them. Financial arrangements should remain proportionate to the scale of the fellowship and should include reasonable accountability when significant or recurring funds are involved. Further guidance is provided in Article 12.

5.9 Responsibility for Local Gatherings

The people who organize and participate in a local gathering share responsibility for conducting it with reasonable care. A Host may carry particular practical responsibility, but hosting does not make that person the owner of the fellowship or the sole person responsible for everything that occurs.

The Proximity Framework provides a common constitutional structure. It does not centrally supervise every local gathering. Each fellowship therefore remains responsible for its own meeting arrangements, safeguarding, conduct, finances, local leadership, communications, and compliance with applicable law.

Safeguarding is part of ordinary Christian responsibility toward one another. The aim is a fellowship in which people can gather with reasonable confidence that their dignity will be respected, concerns can be raised, and entrusted responsibility will not be used as a means of control.

Article 6. Marriage and Marriage Blessing

6.1 Marriage Within the Proximity Framework

Proximity Fellowship receives marriage as a covenantal union of one man and one woman. This understanding belongs to the constitutional practice of the Framework and governs what a fellowship may present, perform, celebrate, or bless as Christian marriage while using the Proximity name.

This Article does not attempt to provide a complete theology of marriage, family life, singleness, divorce, remarriage, or pastoral care. Those questions may require fuller treatment in other guidance. Its purpose here is narrower. It establishes the boundary that governs Christian marriage and marriage blessing within the Proximity Framework.

6.2 One Man and One Woman

Consistent with Holy Scripture as received in Article 1 and with the historic Christian understanding of marriage, Proximity Fellowship recognizes Christian marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

A Proximity Fellowship therefore does not perform, bless, celebrate, or publicly present a union between two persons of the same sex as a Christian marriage under the Framework. A local fellowship using the Proximity name should not present a different definition of Christian marriage as though it were the position of Proximity Fellowship.

6.3 Marriage and Biological Sex

For the purpose of this Article, the terms man and woman refer to biological sex as male and female. The marriage boundary of the Framework is therefore understood in relation to biological sex rather than gender identity.

A Proximity Fellowship does not perform, bless, celebrate, or present as a Christian marriage under the Framework a union in which one or both persons identify as transgender. This provision concerns the Framework's understanding and practice of Christian marriage. It does not diminish the human dignity of a person who identifies as transgender or remove that person's ordinary welcome into Christian fellowship, prayer, Scripture, friendship, and pastoral care.

6.4 The Boundary Governing Christian Marriage Blessings

A Christian marriage blessing offered by a Proximity Fellowship must remain consistent with the understanding of marriage established in this Article. The form may be simple or formal according to local conviction and circumstance, but the meaning of the blessing should not contradict the constitutional boundary.

No Host, Participant, elder, deacon, teacher, steward, or other person acting in the name of a Proximity Fellowship may use a local ceremony, prayer, public declaration, or alternate terminology to present a union outside this boundary as though it were a Christian marriage recognized by the Framework.

This boundary applies to public Framework practice. It does not authorize Participants to investigate, humiliate, expose, or police the private lives of others.

6.5 Personal Conviction and Framework Practice

A Participant may sincerely hold a different personal conviction concerning same-sex marriage, gender identity, or the scope of Christian marriage. Personal disagreement with this Article does not by itself constitute a declaration that the person is outside the Christian faith, nor does it automatically exclude that person from ordinary participation in a Proximity Fellowship.

Freedom of conscience, however, does not require the Framework to enact every conviction held by a Participant. A person may hold and express a differing view with appropriate respect, while the public practice of a fellowship using the Proximity name remains governed by this Article.

Good faith requires honesty in both directions. The Framework should not misrepresent a Participant's personal conviction, and a Participant should not represent a contrary personal conviction as though it were the constitutional position of Proximity Fellowship.

6.6 Human Dignity, Welcome, and Pastoral Care

Every person should be treated with dignity, patience, and Christian charity. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender persons should not be mocked, humiliated, threatened, manipulated, or treated with contempt within a Proximity Fellowship.

A person's disagreement with the marriage position of the Framework does not remove the ordinary claims of neighbor love, hospitality, prayer, truthful conversation, friendship, and pastoral care. Difficult personal circumstances should be approached with discretion and patience rather than public spectacle.

Welcome into ordinary fellowship does not require the Framework to surrender its convictions concerning marriage. Holding a constitutional boundary likewise does not permit Participants to treat another person's dignity as conditional upon agreement.

6.7 Freedom From Coercion

No Host or other Participant should be pressured to perform, assist with, endorse, or publicly affirm a marriage blessing contrary to this Article. No person should be compelled through friendship, financial influence, spiritual authority, threats, shame, or fear of exclusion to act against the constitutional marriage boundary of the Framework.

Likewise, Participants who hold a differing personal conviction should not be subjected to ridicule, forced declarations, or unnecessary interrogation merely to prove loyalty. Where disagreement exists, the fellowship should distinguish between a person's private conviction and conduct that publicly represents or contradicts the Framework's constitutional practice.

Where a difference cannot be carried peacefully within one fellowship, separation may sometimes be necessary. Such separation should be handled without contempt, retaliation, or claims of personal ownership.

6.8 Civil Marriage and Christian Blessing

Civil marriage and Christian marriage blessing are related in many places, but they are not identical in every jurisdiction or Christian tradition. Proximity Fellowship does not claim civil authority to create, invalidate, or adjudicate a legal marriage merely by means of this Charter.

Where a civil marriage, license, registration, authorized officiant, ecclesiastical recognition, or other legal requirement is needed, the people involved remain responsible for using the appropriate lawful or ecclesiastical process. A Proximity Fellowship should not represent a prayer or blessing as creating a legal status that it does not have authority to create.

The existence of a civilly valid marriage does not by itself require a Proximity Fellowship to perform or recognize that union as a Christian marriage blessing under this Framework. In the same way, a Christian blessing offered within the Framework does not by itself establish civil legal status.

Proximity Fellowship does not prescribe one universal liturgy for marriage. Local form may vary within the constitutional boundary established by this Article and within applicable law.

Article 7. The Proximity Name, Recognition, and Public Integrity

7.1 What the Proximity Name Signifies

The name Proximity Fellowship identifies a Christian gathering that voluntarily uses the Proximity Framework and represents itself as operating within this Charter.

Use of the name signifies a real relationship with the Framework. It includes the common Christian foundation of Article 1, the Framework's anchoring in the historic Protestant Christian tradition and its understanding of the biblical canon, and the Constitutional Requirements established by this Charter.

This does not mean that every Participant must be Protestant or must hold the same position on every matter the Charter leaves open. It means that a gathering using the Proximity name should be truthful about the Framework it has chosen to use and should not publicly redefine that Framework while continuing to present itself as Proximity Fellowship.

7.2 Honest Use of the Name

A local fellowship may use the Proximity name when it does so in good faith and in a manner consistent with this Charter. The name should communicate relationship with the Framework rather than ownership, status, or institutional superiority.

A local fellowship should not imply that ProximityFellowship.org has personally approved every teaching, decision, practice, Host, leader, or Participant. It should not claim authority to speak for every Proximity Fellowship or for ProximityFellowship.org unless separately authorized to do so.

The Proximity name must not knowingly be used to deceive people, conceal serious wrongdoing, obtain money through false representation, create a misleading impression of institutional endorsement, or present a local position that contradicts an express Constitutional Requirement as though it were the position of the Framework.

7.3 Local Responsibility Remains Local

A local Proximity Fellowship remains responsible for its own ordinary life and conduct. This includes its meeting arrangements, safeguarding, finances, leadership, communications, treatment of Participants, compliance with applicable law, and other responsibilities arising from its activities.

Use of the Proximity name does not make ProximityFellowship.org the employer, insurer, legal representative, ecclesiastical superior, or operational supervisor of a local fellowship. It does not transfer local liabilities or duties to the steward of the Framework.

A local fellowship may receive guidance from the Framework while remaining responsible for the decisions and actions taken in its own circumstances.

7.4 Public Recognition

ProximityFellowship.org may maintain a public directory, listing, or other form of recognition for local fellowships that are reasonably understood to be using the Framework in good faith.

Public recognition provides clarity about a fellowship's stated relationship with Proximity Fellowship. It does not create a denomination, hierarchy, centralized jurisdiction, or guarantee of theological perfection, personal character, safety, legality, or wise conduct.

Recognition may reasonably rely upon information provided by the local fellowship and other information available to the steward. The absence of intervention by ProximityFellowship.org should not be treated as proof that every aspect of a local fellowship is known, supervised, or approved.

7.5 Good Faith Imperfection

Proximity Fellowship is an imperfect framework used by imperfect Christians. Recognition should therefore not depend upon flawless performance or complete agreement on matters the Charter leaves open.

An honest mistake, local weakness, incomplete use of a recommendation, difference in permitted practice, or good faith theological disagreement should not by itself be treated as misuse of the Proximity name. Local variation is expected within the freedom this Charter deliberately preserves.

The relevant distinction is between ordinary human imperfection and a serious or persistent departure from the Foundational Christian Confession or the Constitutional Requirements of the Framework.

7.6 Serious or Persistent Departure From the Framework

A local fellowship should not continue to present itself publicly as Proximity Fellowship while seriously or persistently disregarding the constitutional identity it claims to represent.

Such departure may include deliberate rejection of the Foundational Christian Confession, persistent disregard of Constitutional Requirements, public practice contrary to an express constitutional boundary, serious misuse of the Proximity name, or deliberate misrepresentation of the Framework's position.

A pattern of departure may become serious through repetition. A single matter may also be sufficiently serious where substantial harm, deliberate deception, grave misconduct, or another fundamental breach of the Framework is involved.

7.7 Clarification and Opportunity for Correction

Where a possible departure from the Framework is raised, the ordinary first response should be clarification and conversation when that is reasonably safe and appropriate. The local fellowship should ordinarily have an opportunity to explain its circumstances, correct inaccurate information, address a misunderstanding, or take reasonable corrective action.

A decision affecting public recognition should be grounded in this Charter rather than personal dislike, rivalry, pressure, or disagreement concerning matters the Charter leaves open.

Immediate protective action may be appropriate where there is credible concern of serious harm, ongoing abuse, unlawful conduct, deliberate deception, or significant risk. In such circumstances, the need to protect people or preserve truthful public representation may reasonably require action before a longer process of dialogue is completed.

7.8 Delisting

Where a local fellowship seriously or persistently fails to meet the Constitutional Requirements, or deliberately misrepresents its relationship with the Framework, ProximityFellowship.org may remove that fellowship from a public directory or other form of recognition. This action may be referred to as delisting.

A delisted fellowship should cease publicly presenting itself as a recognized Proximity Fellowship or as a local fellowship operating under the Proximity Framework. It remains free, subject to applicable law, to continue gathering as Christians under another name or arrangement.

Delisting exists to protect the truthful meaning and public integrity of the Proximity name. It is not a means of acquiring control over the people who once used it.

7.9 Delisting Is Not Spiritual Judgment

Delisting is not a declaration that the people involved are not Christians. It is not a judgment concerning their salvation, eternal destiny, standing before God, baptism, church membership, or the legitimacy of every Christian relationship they may have.

ProximityFellowship.org does not claim authority to pronounce such judgments merely because it stewards a human Framework and its public name.

Recognition makes no person more Christian. Delisting makes no person less Christian. The question addressed by this Article is narrower. It concerns whether a local fellowship may truthfully continue to identify itself publicly with the Proximity Framework.

7.10 Voluntary Withdrawal

A local fellowship may conclude at any time that the Proximity Framework is no longer useful or suitable for its circumstances. It may withdraw voluntarily without seeking permission from ProximityFellowship.org.

Where a fellowship withdraws, it should cease presenting itself publicly as a Proximity Fellowship and, where applicable, request removal from any public listing or recognition maintained by ProximityFellowship.org.

Voluntary withdrawal should not ordinarily be treated as misconduct, disloyalty, or spiritual failure. The fellowship remains free to continue Christian fellowship according to its own convictions and lawful arrangements. The Framework is a means of serving fellowship, not an end that Christians are required to preserve.

Article 8. Stewardship, Amendment, and Succession

8.1 Stewardship of ProximityFellowship.org

ProximityFellowship.org serves as the public steward of the Proximity Framework. Its responsibilities include maintaining the current Charter, making the Framework and its principal resources publicly available, explaining the Framework, preserving the integrity of its public presentation, and carrying the limited recognition responsibilities described in Article 7.

At the publication of this First Edition, this stewardship is carried by the initiator of Proximity Fellowship, Michael Lin. This describes the present arrangement. It does not create permanent personal authority or ownership. Stewardship may be shared, transferred, or reorganized as the work develops, provided that any such arrangement remains consistent with this Charter.

8.2 Stewardship Is Not Ecclesiastical Government

Stewardship of ProximityFellowship.org does not create a denomination, hierarchy, bishopric, church court, or centralized government over local fellowships. A steward does not become the pastor, elder, bishop, priest, minister, spiritual superior, or owner of Christians who use the Framework merely by stewarding it.

The steward may care for the published Framework and its public name. Local fellowships remain responsible for their own Christian life, leadership, safeguarding, finances, practices, relationships, and lawful arrangements. Stewardship of a Framework must not be confused with headship over Christ's people.

8.3 Accountability and Transparency

The current Charter and the identity of those carrying substantial public stewardship should be reasonably clear to Participants and the public. Substantive constitutional changes should be dated and documented so that people who rely upon the Framework can know what text is in force and what has changed.

Entrusted responsibility should be exercised honestly, humbly, and with appropriate accountability. Where a steward has a material personal interest in a significant decision, that interest should be acknowledged. Where a matter could substantially affect the integrity of the Framework or the public recognition of a fellowship, seeking the counsel of mature persons outside the immediate dispute is ordinarily wise.

Transparency exists to make stewardship understandable and accountable. It should remain proportionate and should not become an unnecessary administrative burden.

8.4 Protection Against Personal Control

No steward owns the Framework, the Participants, or the local fellowships that use it. The Proximity name, website, constitutional text, public influence, financial resources, and other entrusted responsibilities should be treated as matters of stewardship rather than personal possession.

A steward must not reshape Proximity Fellowship around a personal following, private revelation, financial interest, reputation, or preferred secondary theology. Financial contribution, public prominence, length of service, or proximity to the initiator does not by itself create greater constitutional authority.

The Framework should remain capable of being understood and evaluated apart from the personality of the person currently administering it. Christians are not property, and stewardship does not create a claim upon their loyalty.

8.5 Constitutional Interpretation

ProximityFellowship.org may explain the Charter and may offer interpretations where wording is genuinely unclear. Such interpretation should read the Charter as a whole and should respect the four layers described in How This Charter Works.

The Foundational Christian Confession establishes the common Christian floor. Constitutional Requirements establish the boundaries governing use of the Proximity Framework and name. Framework Principles and Guidance should be read as guidance unless the Charter expressly makes something binding. Matters deliberately left to Local Christian Freedom should remain open.

Where an older resource, local custom, explanatory text, or other Proximity publication appears to conflict with the current Charter, the Charter governs unless and until it is properly amended.

8.6 Clarification Must Not Create New Requirements

A clarification may explain an existing provision. It may not quietly create a new Constitutional Requirement, convert a recommendation into a rule, turn an example into a prohibition, or remove a freedom the Charter deliberately preserves.

Where a proposed explanation would materially change what the Framework requires, permits, or forbids, the matter should be treated as a proposed amendment rather than as interpretation. The same principle applies to companion guides, website explanations, Frequently Asked Questions, teaching materials, and other resources. None may become a second Charter by gradually adding requirements that the Charter itself does not establish.

8.7 Amendment of the Charter

The Charter may be amended when substantial reasons make amendment appropriate. Such reasons may include clearer understanding, experience from local fellowships, a genuine safeguarding concern, an important practical weakness, theological reflection, or a need to correct language that has proved materially unclear or unwise.

Substantive amendment should be deliberate, identifiable, and documented. It should not be made secretly, casually, merely for popularity, or simply because one steward strongly prefers a different formulation. A revised constitutional text should identify its edition or effective date clearly enough that those relying upon it can distinguish the current Charter from superseded versions.

Particular care is required where an amendment would affect the identity established in Article 1. The historic Christian confession, the anchoring of the Framework in the historic Protestant Christian tradition, and the Protestant understanding of the biblical canon must not be altered indirectly through interpretation or supplementary material. Any proposed change to such matters would be a change to the Framework's constitutional identity and must be presented openly as such.

The same principle applies to other express Constitutional Requirements. A constitutional boundary should not be removed or reversed through informal guidance.

8.8 Stability and Responsible Development

People should be able to rely upon the Charter without expecting its constitutional meaning to shift continually. Stability is therefore a form of stewardship.

The Framework should remain teachable and correctable, but correction should be careful rather than restless. Suggestions from Hosts, Participants, local fellowships, and other Christians may be received and considered on their merits. No person is entitled to have a proposed change adopted merely because it has been requested.

Experience may reveal that a provision needs clarification, strengthening, revision, or removal. The aim of development is greater faithfulness, clarity, usefulness, and integrity, not continual institutional expansion.

8.9 Change Without Accumulation

Development should not be assumed to require more rules, more procedures, more offices, or more permanent requirements. Greater experience sometimes calls for greater simplicity.

A new constitutional provision should be introduced only when genuine necessity, meaningful safeguarding, clearer understanding, or the purposes of the Framework reasonably require it. Difficulties that can be addressed through local wisdom, temporary arrangements, or existing principles should not automatically produce permanent universal rules.

The Framework should also remain willing to remove duplication, obsolete provisions, or unnecessary complexity when doing so can preserve its purposes more clearly. Not every difficulty needs a rule, and not every local solution belongs in the Charter.

8.10 Succession and Continuity

The stewardship of ProximityFellowship.org should be capable of continuing when a particular steward becomes unable, unwilling, or unsuitable to continue. Reasonable arrangements should therefore be made for the preservation of the Charter, public access to the Framework, essential records, administrative access, and other matters necessary for responsible continuity.

Where stewardship is transferred to another person or group, the responsibility received is stewardship rather than ownership. Those who assume it should preserve the constitutional text then in force, the decentralized character of local fellowships, the freedom and dignity of Participants, the distinction between stewardship and ecclesiastical government, and the public accessibility of the Framework.

Practical methods of transition may vary with circumstances. The companion guide The Proximity Fellowship Seasons of Transience offers fuller guidance on continuity and succession, but it cannot alter the constitutional principles established here.

8.11 No Steward Is Indispensable

No steward should become indispensable to Proximity Fellowship. A person may serve faithfully for a long time and still remain a steward whose responsibilities can eventually be shared, transferred, or concluded.

The initiator may become less necessary. A later steward may step aside. A stewardship group may change. None of these events should be treated as a loss of ownership, because ownership was never granted.

Where the Framework becomes healthier, clearer, more accountable, and more capable of continuing without dependence upon one human personality, that should be welcomed. Christ is the Head. Scripture is the norm. No human being is indispensable.

PART III

Framework Principles and Guidance

The Articles in this Part offer serious guidance for the ordinary life of a Proximity Fellowship. They are intended to help Christians gather well within the constitutional foundation already established. Unless this Charter expressly states otherwise, these provisions guide local fellowship without imposing one universal form.

Article 9. Gathering and Shared Christian Life

9.1 The Ordinary Christian Gathering

A Proximity Fellowship exists so that Christians may gather with one another in Christ. The gathering may be simple. It may involve only a few people around a table, or a larger group meeting in another suitable place. Its worth does not depend upon size, formality, equipment, public visibility, or the presence of a professional religious worker.

The ordinary gathering should make room for Christian life together. Prayer, Scripture, worship, thanksgiving, encouragement, conversation, mutual care, and the sharing of faith may all have a natural place. The purpose is not to reproduce one prescribed kind of church service. The purpose is faithful Christian fellowship centered upon Christ.

9.2 Prayer and Scripture

Prayer and Scripture should have a meaningful place in the ordinary life of a Proximity Fellowship. Participants should be free to pray sincerely without being required to imitate another person's vocabulary, style, posture, or manner of expression. Prayer should express dependence upon God and should not be used to display spiritual superiority or to control another person.

Scripture should be read, heard, discussed, and applied with care. Teaching and conversation should seek to distinguish the text of Scripture from personal opinion, tradition, speculation, and preference. Participants remain free to examine interpretations thoughtfully, including interpretations offered by respected or influential people.

For Scripture presented to the gathering as the biblical text of Proximity Fellowship, the canon established in Article 1 governs. When a fellowship selects Bibles or readings for common use, it should use editions whose canonical contents correspond to that Protestant canon. The Deuterocanonical or Apocryphal books should not be presented in the name of Proximity Fellowship as part of Holy Scripture. This does not require a Participant from another Christian tradition to renounce that tradition's own canonical convictions in order to participate.

9.3 Worship, Thanksgiving, and Encouragement

A Proximity gathering should direct attention toward God rather than toward the personality, performance, or status of those who lead or speak. Worship may include singing, prayer, Scripture, thanksgiving, silence, reflection, testimony, teaching, or other forms appropriate to the fellowship.

No particular musical style, instrument, posture, duration, or liturgical pattern is required by the Framework. A simple gathering may be as genuine as a carefully ordered one. Participants should also have room to encourage one another, give thanks for God's work, and speak words that strengthen faith, hope, love, endurance, and obedience to Christ.

9.4 Mutual Care and Shared Life

Christian fellowship involves more than attending the same meeting. Participants should seek, according to their ability and circumstances, to know one another, listen well, bear burdens, offer hospitality, pray for one another, and give practical care where it is reasonably needed.

Care should be freely given rather than used to create obligation, personal loyalty, or dependence. A local fellowship should also recognize the limits of what it can responsibly provide. Serious medical, psychological, legal, safeguarding, financial, or other needs may require appropriate help beyond the fellowship.

Shared life grows through ordinary faithfulness. It does not require every Participant to become equally close to every other person or to disclose private matters beyond what is freely and wisely shared.

9.5 Participation Without Performance

Where reasonably possible, gatherings should make room for meaningful participation rather than turning Christian fellowship into a performance observed by others. Different Participants may contribute through prayer, reading, conversation, hospitality, teaching, music, practical service, encouragement, silence, or other appropriate forms.

Participation should remain appropriate to gifts, maturity, circumstances, and conscience. No person should be pressured to speak, pray aloud, sing, testify, teach, display a spiritual gift, or take a visible role merely to prove commitment or maturity.

A fellowship should not measure spiritual health by polish, eloquence, emotional intensity, attendance size, or the prominence of particular personalities. Ordinary Christians serving one another faithfully may express the life of fellowship more truthfully than an impressive program.

9.6 Different Forms of Gathering

Proximity Fellowship does not prescribe one location, frequency, duration, or order for every gathering. A fellowship may meet in a home, a rented room, a workplace, a university, a neighborhood setting, a cafe, outdoors, or another suitable place. Circumstances may also sometimes call for remote participation or other practical arrangements.

A gathering may be weekly, less frequent, or arranged according to the realistic life of its Participants. It may follow a familiar pattern or remain quite informal. Local forms should serve the people who gather rather than become tests of faithfulness merely because they have become customary.

Simplicity should remain a genuine possibility. A fellowship does not need to become increasingly elaborate in order to become more mature.

9.7 Families and Different Generations

A Proximity Fellowship may include children, young people, adults, older people, single persons, married persons, and families in different circumstances. Different generations should be treated as part of the ordinary life of Christian fellowship rather than as inconveniences to be managed.

Parents and legal guardians retain their proper responsibilities for children. Participation and responsibility should remain appropriate to age, maturity, safety, and applicable law. Children and young people should be welcomed meaningfully without being placed in roles or situations beyond what is appropriate for them.

Local arrangements may differ according to circumstances. Article 5 continues to govern safeguarding, dignity, and responsible conduct wherever children, young people, or vulnerable persons are involved.

9.8 A Gathering Need Not Follow One Ecclesiastical Form

A Proximity Fellowship may resemble a traditional church gathering, or it may take a simpler and less formal form. The absence of a church building, professional clergy, formal liturgy, denominational structure, or recognized ecclesiastical title does not by itself determine whether genuine Christian fellowship is taking place.

The Framework does not require every local fellowship to call itself a church. It also does not forbid Participants from understanding their shared life as a genuine expression of the local church according to their reading of Scripture and their Christian convictions.

Proximity Fellowship does not attempt to settle every ecclesiological question for every Participant. Christians from different traditions may retain serious convictions about the nature, marks, government, ministry, and sacramental life of the Church while gathering together within the constitutional boundaries of the Framework.

9.9 Fellowship Under Christ

No arrangement described in this Article should become more important than the fellowship it is meant to serve. A familiar order of meeting, a valued tradition, a gifted teacher, a Host, a particular location, or even the Framework itself must remain secondary to Christ.

Local fellowships should therefore use these principles with prayer, wisdom, and mature judgment. What helps Christians gather faithfully may be received with gratitude. What becomes unnecessarily burdensome should remain open to reconsideration where the Charter permits it.

The aim is simple. Christians gather under the headship of Christ, with Scripture as the norm, seeking to draw nearer to Him and to one another.

Article 10. Hosts, Leadership, and Shared Responsibility

10.1 The Host as Servant

A Host is a Participant who accepts practical responsibility for helping a Proximity Fellowship gather in an orderly, welcoming, and responsible manner. Hosting may include communication, preparing a meeting place, helping the gathering begin and end well, attending to practical needs, and facilitating the ordinary flow of fellowship.

The role exists for the good of the people who gather. A Host should therefore approach the responsibility with humility, reliability, hospitality, and reasonable care. The meeting place may belong to the Host. The fellowship does not. Hosting is a form of service.

10.2 Hosting Does Not Create Spiritual Rank

Becoming a Host does not by itself make a person a pastor, elder, bishop, priest, minister, deacon, or other ecclesiastical office holder. It does not place the Host above other Participants in human dignity or Christian worth.

A Host may teach, pray, facilitate discussion, offer counsel, or exercise other forms of Christian service when appropriate. Those activities should arise from gifts, maturity, trust, local conviction, and the needs of the fellowship rather than from the title of Host alone.

A Host remains a Participant among Participants and remains subject to Christ, Scripture, this Charter, and appropriate correction.

10.3 Shared Responsibility

The ordinary life of a Proximity Fellowship should not rest unnecessarily upon one person. Participants are encouraged to contribute according to their gifts, maturity, circumstances, and willingness to serve.

Responsibility may be shared in prayer, teaching, hospitality, practical care, communication, administration, safeguarding, financial stewardship, preparation of gatherings, and other forms of service. Not every Participant must perform every role. Neither should a small number of people be expected to carry every responsibility indefinitely when others are reasonably able to help.

Shared responsibility should make the fellowship more capable of continuing faithfully when circumstances change.

10.4 Elders

A local Proximity Fellowship may recognize elders where its Participants believe that doing so is appropriate and consistent with Scripture and their Christian convictions. Proximity Fellowship does not itself ordain, install, or universally recognize elders for every local fellowship.

Where elders are recognized, their responsibility should be understood as Christian service involving maturity, care, teaching, counsel, oversight, or other responsibilities appropriate to the local understanding of that role. The title should not be used to create personal ownership, immunity from question, or a claim to control another Participant's conscience.

Christians from traditions with different understandings of eldership may continue to hold those convictions within the freedom provided by this Charter.

10.5 Deacons

A local fellowship may likewise recognize deacons or persons carrying comparable forms of practical Christian service. The name, scope, and manner of such service may differ according to local circumstances and Christian tradition.

Service associated with deacons may include hospitality, practical care, assistance to Participants, administration, stewardship of resources, coordination of charitable work, or other responsibilities that serve the fellowship.

The title itself does not make the service faithful. Character, trustworthiness, and the manner in which responsibility is exercised matter more than status.

10.6 Teachers and Other Forms of Service

Teaching, facilitating discussion, leading prayer or worship, offering pastoral care, administering practical matters, serving children and families, coordinating hospitality, and other responsibilities may be entrusted to suitable Participants according to local needs.

A person who teaches frequently should not therefore become the unquestioned voice of the fellowship. Teaching should remain open to examination in light of Scripture, and those who teach should distinguish responsible biblical instruction from personal interpretation, speculation, or preference.

Proximity does not require every useful form of service to receive an official title. Faithful service may be formal or informal according to the needs of the fellowship.

10.7 Character and Maturity

When significant responsibility is entrusted to a person, the fellowship should give serious attention to Christian character, integrity, maturity, reliability, humility, sound judgment, and the ability to serve others well.

Responsibility should not be entrusted merely because a person is wealthy, educated, charismatic, persuasive, socially influential, closely connected to existing leaders, or among the earliest Participants. Neither length of participation nor public visibility is sufficient by itself to establish fitness for responsibility.

Different responsibilities may call for different gifts and levels of maturity. Local judgment should therefore remain careful, proportionate, and attentive to Scripture and the actual responsibility involved.

10.8 Leadership as Service

Where leadership exists within a Proximity Fellowship, its proper purpose is to help Christians serve one another, grow in Christ, and gather faithfully. Leadership should not be used to build a personal following, create dependence upon a personality, accumulate status, or establish possession over a fellowship.

Those carrying responsibility should seek to act honestly, humbly, transparently, and for the good of the people affected. They should listen where decisions materially affect the common life of the fellowship and should welcome the responsible participation of others.

A healthy exercise of leadership should make other Christians more capable of faithful participation rather than less capable without the leader.

10.9 Accountability

No Host, elder, deacon, teacher, or other person carrying significant responsibility is beyond correction. Greater responsibility should ordinarily bring greater accountability, not greater insulation from questions.

Concerns about conduct, teaching, use of authority, financial stewardship, safeguarding, dishonesty, or other serious matters should be capable of being raised without retaliation. The response should be proportionate to the concern and consistent with the dignity of everyone involved. Article 5 governs safeguarding and serious misconduct, and Article 13 addresses conflict, correction, and restoration more fully.

A title must never be used to silence legitimate concern or to shield abuse, manipulation, exploitation, or serious wrongdoing.

10.10 No Universal Leadership Structure

Proximity Fellowship does not prescribe one universal structure of church government or local leadership. A fellowship may function through one Host, several Hosts, elders, deacons, teachers, stewards, facilitators, other forms of service, or a simpler arrangement without formal titles.

Participants may retain different Christian convictions concerning pastors, ministers, bishops, priests, elders, deacons, congregational government, presbyterial government, episcopal government, or other forms of church order. Such differences do not by themselves prevent fellowship where the Constitutional Requirements can be honored.

No local arrangement should be presented as the one required Proximity model merely because it works well in a particular place.

10.11 Healthy Transfer of Responsibility

Responsibility should remain transferable. A person who has served faithfully should be able to step aside, share a role, train another person, or hand responsibility to others without treating the change as a loss of personal status or ownership.

Where reasonably possible, important knowledge, practical access, records, relationships, and recurring responsibilities should not be concentrated so completely in one person that the fellowship becomes unable to continue when that person is absent.

A healthy fellowship prepares for continuity before a crisis requires it. If leadership becomes more shared, more accountable, and less dependent upon one individual, that should ordinarily be regarded as maturity rather than decline.

The Framework does not require every fellowship to adopt the same offices or titles. It does ask that whatever responsibility exists be exercised as service rather than possession. No human being is indispensable.

Article 11. Christian Practices

11.1 Practices Within the Common Christian Foundation

Christian fellowship includes practices that Christ gave to His people and gifts through which Christians seek to serve one another. Proximity Fellowship receives these practices within the common Christian foundation while recognizing that historic Christian traditions often differ concerning their theology, form, administration, timing, and frequency.

The purpose of this Article is to provide sufficient direction for Christians to gather faithfully without making one denominational practice a condition of fellowship where the Charter deliberately leaves room. Constitutional Requirements established elsewhere remain binding. Within that boundary, recommendations in this Article should remain recommendations, and matters left open should remain open.

11.2 The Lord's Supper

Proximity recognizes the Lord's Supper as a Christian practice given by Christ to His disciples. It should be received with reverence, gratitude, self-examination, mutual love, and remembrance of Christ.

Proximity recommends that a fellowship make space for the Lord's Supper regularly and, where circumstances allow, consider making that opportunity available at each gathering as a standing invitation rather than an obligation. A fellowship need not force the practice on every occasion merely because the opportunity is available.

The Framework does not impose one universal position concerning the theological meaning of the Lord's Supper, the elements used, frequency, liturgical form, admission to the table, or the ecclesiastical office of the person who administers or facilitates it. Local Participants should approach these questions according to Scripture, conscience, Christian conviction, mutual respect, and any responsibilities arising from their own church traditions or applicable law.

11.3 Baptism

Proximity recognizes baptism as a Christian practice commanded by Christ. Christians differ concerning the appropriate recipients, timing, mode, theological meaning, and ecclesiastical administration of baptism. The Framework does not make one denominational understanding of these questions a condition of participation.

Where a local fellowship undertakes baptism, those involved should proceed openly, responsibly, and in a manner consistent with their Christian convictions. The wishes and convictions of the person being baptized, or of the responsible parent or guardian where appropriate, should be treated seriously. Applicable law, safety, the circumstances of minors, and any relevant ecclesiastical responsibilities should also be respected.

Proximity does not require every baptism connected with a fellowship to be administered through Proximity itself. A Participant may seek baptism through a church, parish, congregation, minister, or other Christian community where that better serves the person's convictions, recognition needs, or ecclesiastical circumstances.

11.4 Spiritual Gifts

Proximity recognizes that Christians differ in their understanding of the continuation, character, and exercise of spiritual gifts. The Framework does not require every Participant to adopt one theological position concerning such gifts.

Gifts should be exercised for service rather than status. No claimed gift establishes personal ownership, spiritual superiority, or unquestionable authority over another Participant. No person should be required to demonstrate a particular spiritual experience as proof of salvation, Christian maturity, acceptance by God, or fitness for fellowship.

A local fellowship may welcome different expressions of Christian gifting where they can be exercised consistently with Scripture, the Constitutional Requirements, and the health of the gathering.

11.5 Tongues and Interpretation

Where speaking in tongues occurs publicly in a gathered fellowship, Proximity recommends following the Apostle Paul's emphasis upon intelligibility and edification. Public tongues should ordinarily be accompanied by clear interpretation so that the gathering can receive what is being expressed and be built up together.

Where no interpretation is present, the practice should ordinarily remain private between the speaker and God rather than becoming a public expression that the fellowship is expected to receive without understanding.

No Participant should be pressured to speak in tongues or to regard speaking in tongues as necessary evidence of salvation, spiritual maturity, reception of the Holy Spirit, or acceptance by God. Christians who hold different convictions concerning tongues may remain in fellowship where those convictions are exercised with humility and regard for one another.

11.6 Prophecy and Personal Impressions

Proximity welcomes prophecy and other spiritually significant contributions when they are offered humbly, expressed intelligibly, and received with responsible discernment. What is spoken should remain open to thoughtful weighing by the fellowship rather than being placed beyond question because a speaker claims divine origin.

Participants should use particular care with expressions such as "God told me" when those words could place personal impressions beyond examination or pressure another person to obey. A Participant may speak of a concern, conviction, impression, dream, vision, or sense of guidance while still acknowledging human fallibility and the need for discernment.

No prophecy, personal impression, dream, vision, or claimed revelation may supersede Scripture, contradict the Constitutional Requirements, or become a means of controlling another person's conscience, relationships, finances, body, or personal decisions.

11.7 Peace, Intelligibility, and Mutual Edification

The exercise of Christian practices and spiritual gifts within a Proximity Fellowship should serve the health of the gathering. Clarity, peace, intelligibility, mutual respect, discernment, and edification should ordinarily guide how public expressions are received and ordered.

Freedom to exercise a conviction does not create an unlimited right to dominate a gathering or repeatedly prevent ordinary fellowship from taking place. Where a practice becomes persistently disruptive, confusing, coercive, or harmful, local Participants may establish reasonable and proportionate limits while seeking to preserve both Christian freedom and the good of the fellowship.

Order should not be used as an excuse to suppress every unfamiliar expression. Freedom should not be used as an excuse to disregard the effect of one's actions upon others.

11.8 Different Christian Convictions

Participants in one fellowship may hold different convictions concerning baptism, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, tongues, prophecy, liturgical practice, and related questions that the Charter leaves open. Such differences do not automatically require separation.

Christians should be able to explain their convictions honestly without treating every disagreement as a test of loyalty. A Participant may abstain from a permitted practice according to conscience where doing so does not create unnecessary disruption or disregard the dignity and safety of others.

Local fellowships should seek arrangements that allow genuine differences to coexist where this can be done faithfully. Where a difference cannot be carried peacefully in one gathering, Participants may consider other arrangements without contempt or unnecessary hostility.

11.9 Recommendations Are Not Hidden Requirements

The recommendations in this Article express the considered direction of the Proximity Framework. They should be taken seriously, but they do not become Constitutional Requirements merely because they are strongly recommended or repeatedly practiced.

A Host, teacher, elder, influential Participant, local majority, or resource published by Proximity should not present a recommendation as though the Charter requires it when the Charter does not. Likewise, a local custom should not become a universal rule merely because it has served one fellowship well.

Where this Article leaves a matter to Christian conviction, local discernment, or conscience, that freedom is intentional and should remain real.

11.10 Further Guidance in the Companion Guide

The Proximity Fellowship: A Guide to Christian Practices provides fuller discussion, examples, and practical guidance concerning the subjects addressed in this Article. The Guide is a companion to the Charter and should be read in harmony with it.

The Guide may recommend particular ways of approaching baptism, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, tongues, prophecy, personal impressions, leadership, marriage blessing, and related questions. Such guidance cannot create a new Constitutional Requirement unless that requirement is established by the Charter itself.

Where an apparent conflict exists between the Guide and this Charter, the Charter governs. The purpose of the Guide is to help Christians apply the Framework wisely, not to become a second Charter.

Article 12. Financial and Practical Stewardship

12.1 Simplicity in Financial Matters

Proximity Fellowship encourages simplicity in financial and practical matters. The ordinary purpose of a fellowship is Christian fellowship, not the accumulation of money, property, equipment, or institutional resources.

Financial arrangements should therefore remain proportionate to actual needs. A small fellowship with little financial activity may need very little formal structure. Greater scale, recurring funds, property, paid service, charitable activity, or significant obligations may reasonably require clearer arrangements and greater accountability.

Simplicity should reduce unnecessary burden. It should never become a reason for secrecy, carelessness, or personal control.

12.2 Voluntary Giving

Participants may voluntarily contribute money, food, meeting space, equipment, time, or other resources according to conscience, ability, and local need. Giving should remain free rather than becoming a measure of Christian maturity, loyalty, influence, or worth.

A person who gives more does not thereby acquire greater spiritual authority, decision-making power, or ownership of the fellowship. A person who gives little or nothing should not be treated as less important because of limited means or a different conscience concerning giving.

A local fellowship is not required to transfer money to ProximityFellowship.org or to another Proximity Fellowship merely because it uses the Framework. Local resources remain under local stewardship unless Participants freely agree otherwise.

12.3 No Financial Condition for Fellowship

No payment, membership fee, subscription, tithe, donation, purchase, or other financial contribution may be made a condition of ordinary participation in a Proximity Fellowship.

Financial appeals should be conducted with restraint and integrity. Participants should not be embarrassed publicly for not giving, repeatedly pressured for money, threatened with exclusion, or promised spiritual or material advantage in exchange for financial support.

Article 5 establishes the constitutional minimum concerning financial integrity. This Article offers further guidance for handling money and practical resources responsibly.

12.4 Shared Responsibility for Significant Funds

Where a fellowship receives or manages recurring or significant funds, responsibility should ordinarily be shared rather than unnecessarily concentrated in one person. Two responsible Participants may be sufficient in some circumstances. Three or more may be wiser where the scale or complexity of the activity reasonably warrants it.

Those entrusted with financial responsibility should be known to the fellowship, should understand the purpose of the funds, and should be able to account reasonably for how money is received, held, and used.

No Host, elder, deacon, steward, teacher, or other Participant should regard access to fellowship funds as a personal privilege or source of authority.

12.5 Transparency and Records

Where shared money is received, held, or spent, Participants should be able to understand in reasonable terms what has been received, what it is intended for, how it has been used, and who has responsibility for it.

The level of record-keeping should correspond to the scale, frequency, legal character, and practical risk of the fellowship's financial activity. A small gathering should not be burdened with unnecessary institutional accounting. A fellowship handling substantial or recurring resources should not rely upon memory or private knowledge alone.

Where a contribution is given for a clearly stated purpose, that purpose should be honored so far as reasonably possible and consistent with applicable law. If the original purpose can no longer be fulfilled, the appropriate Participants should be informed and a reasonable alternative should be agreed upon where possible.

12.6 Property and Resources

A local Proximity Fellowship may own, rent, borrow, receive, or use property and other resources where appropriate and lawful. Property is not required for a fellowship to exist, and acquiring property should not become a measure of maturity or permanence.

Before taking on substantial property, debt, contracts, recurring payments, or other significant obligations, Participants should consider whether the commitment is actually necessary, who bears legal responsibility, how it will be sustained, and what should happen if the fellowship changes or ceases to gather.

No individual should casually bind other Participants to substantial financial or practical obligations without their knowledge and appropriate agreement.

12.7 Hospitality and Practical Costs

Many ordinary costs can be handled simply. Participants may provide food, meeting space, transportation, supplies, communication costs, or other practical support voluntarily. They may share expenses, reimburse legitimate costs, or agree upon another transparent arrangement suited to their circumstances.

Hospitality should remain hospitality rather than becoming an unspoken financial burden on one person or household. A Participant who regularly provides a meeting place, meals, transportation, or other resources should remain free to communicate reasonable limits.

Where compensation, reimbursement, gifts, or payment for significant service is appropriate, the arrangement should be lawful, transparent, proportionate, and clearly distinguished from personal appropriation of fellowship resources.

12.8 Insurance and Local Practical Responsibility

ProximityFellowship.org does not provide insurance, financial guarantees, liability coverage, legal representation, accounting services, or a universal organizational structure for local fellowships.

Hosts and Participants remain responsible for the practical consequences of their local activities. Depending upon the place, size, property, transportation, employment, charitable activity, or other circumstances involved, ordinary wisdom may include reviewing relevant insurance, legal obligations, tax responsibilities, licenses, or other local requirements.

Where a matter exceeds the reasonable competence of the fellowship, appropriate local legal, accounting, insurance, tax, or other professional guidance should be sought. The Charter does not replace such advice.

12.9 Proportionate Arrangements

Financial and practical arrangements should grow only as real responsibility requires. A fellowship with little shared money may need no account, committee, budget, or formal process. A fellowship receiving substantial funds or holding significant assets may reasonably need documented responsibilities, multiple people involved, regular reporting, and other safeguards.

The same principle applies to administration generally. Structure should serve the fellowship rather than become an end in itself. Practical systems should remain understandable, reviewable, and proportionate to the risks and responsibilities they exist to address.

Greater maturity does not necessarily mean greater financial complexity. Sometimes the healthier development is to keep arrangements simple because little more is actually needed.

12.10 Resources Are Held in Trust

Money, property, equipment, information, and other resources entrusted for fellowship purposes should be treated as held in trust for those purposes. They do not become the personal property of a Host or other Participant merely because that person receives, stores, administers, or uses them.

If a local fellowship ceases to operate while holding shared funds or assets, those resources should be handled lawfully and consistently with any prior agreement and the purposes for which they were entrusted. They should not automatically pass into the personal possession of the person who happened to hold them.

Financial assistance given to a person in need should likewise remain an act of Christian care rather than a means of acquiring loyalty, influence, or control over that person.

The governing posture is stewardship. Resources exist to serve Christian fellowship and responsible Christian care. They should never become a hidden means of ownership over people.

Article 13. Disagreement, Conflict, Correction, and Restoration

13.1 The Reality of Human Imperfection

Proximity Fellowship is an imperfect Framework for imperfect Christians. Misunderstanding, disappointment, disagreement, hurt, failure, and conflict may arise even among people who sincerely desire to follow Christ.

The presence of conflict does not by itself mean that a fellowship has failed. What matters greatly is how Participants respond when difficulty appears. Truthfulness, humility, patience, justice, repentance, forgiveness, wisdom, and love should shape the response.

A healthy fellowship should neither expect perfection nor become careless about harm. Christian maturity includes learning how to face difficulty without pretending that it does not exist.

13.2 Difference Is Not Automatically Conflict

Christians may hold different convictions, preferences, experiences, and judgments without becoming enemies. A theological disagreement, difference of conscience, unfamiliar practice, or personal preference should not automatically be treated as rebellion, disloyalty, or misconduct.

Participants should distinguish between a difference that can be carried peacefully within fellowship and a conflict that requires particular attention. Questions, disagreement with a leader, declining an optional practice, or expressing another interpretation are not in themselves evidence of spiritual failure.

Where the Charter leaves room, that room should remain real even when Participants feel strongly about the matter.

13.3 Direct and Respectful Conversation

Where reasonably safe and appropriate, a Participant who has a concern should ordinarily seek direct and respectful conversation with the person involved. The purpose should be understanding, truth, correction, reconciliation, or practical resolution.

Direct conversation should not be used as an opportunity for intimidation, accusation, or victory. Participants should listen as well as speak and should remain open to the possibility that they have misunderstood part of the situation.

Direct conversation is not required where it would reasonably expose a person to danger, retaliation, abuse, intimidation, serious manipulation, or another significant safeguarding concern. Wisdom may require another path.

13.4 Seeking Wise Assistance

When direct conversation does not resolve a matter, or when direct conversation is not appropriate, Participants may seek the help of mature and trusted Christians. Depending upon the circumstances, this may include another Participant, a Host, an elder, a deacon, a pastor or minister from another church, or another person whose judgment is reasonably trusted.

Such assistance should seek greater understanding, fairness, wisdom, and peace. It should not become a method for collecting allies or building opposing camps.

ProximityFellowship.org may explain the Framework where clarification is needed, but it does not ordinarily function as a central court or appeals tribunal for local disputes. Ordinary conflict remains primarily a local Christian responsibility.

13.5 Correction and Restoration

Where correction is appropriate, it should address conduct, words, decisions, teaching, or entrusted responsibilities rather than attack a person's human dignity or worth.

The ordinary aim of correction should be truth, repentance where needed, repair of harm where possible, growth, and restoration to healthy Christian life. Depending upon the matter, an appropriate response may include acknowledgment of wrongdoing, apology, restitution, changed conduct, additional accountability, or temporary limitation of a particular responsibility.

Restoration should not be confused with pretending that nothing happened. Trust may need time to be rebuilt, and some responsibilities may properly remain limited even after forgiveness has been offered.

13.6 Forgiveness and Appropriate Boundaries

Christians are called to forgive, yet forgiveness does not require the removal of every boundary. A Participant may forgive another person while still exercising reasonable caution, limiting contact, declining renewed responsibility, or choosing not to continue in the same close relationship.

Reconciliation is a worthy hope, but it cannot always be achieved immediately and should not be manufactured through pressure. Restored peace does not necessarily require restored friendship, restored trust, or continued participation in the same fellowship.

Forgiveness should never be used to silence legitimate concerns or to require a harmed person to return to an unsafe situation. Wisdom remains necessary.

13.7 Distinguishing Disagreement From Misconduct

A fellowship should make a serious distinction between legitimate disagreement and conduct that harms others or violates responsibilities established by this Charter.

Disagreement may involve theology, local practice, leadership judgment, personality, or conscience. Misconduct may involve abuse, exploitation, coercion, manipulation, dishonesty, serious financial wrongdoing, threats, retaliation, persistent disruption, deliberate misrepresentation, or another serious violation of the dignity and safety of others.

Strong disagreement does not become misconduct merely because it is uncomfortable. At the same time, the language of conscience or theological conviction must not be used to excuse conduct that violates Constitutional Requirements or the lawful safety of others.

13.8 Serious Concerns and Safeguarding

Credible concerns involving abuse, exploitation, violence, coercion, serious financial wrongdoing, unlawful conduct, or significant danger should be treated with appropriate seriousness. A desire to preserve harmony must not become a reason to ignore serious harm.

Article 5 governs safeguarding, integrity, and responsible conduct. Where necessary for protection, a local fellowship may limit or suspend a person's particular responsibilities or participation in particular activities while a serious concern is being considered. Protective measures should be proportionate and should not automatically be presented as a final declaration of guilt.

Where civil authorities, safeguarding agencies, emergency services, or other appropriate professional bodies should be involved, internal Christian processes must not be treated as a substitute for them.

13.9 No Public Shaming

Public humiliation should not be an ordinary method of correction. Personal failure, disagreement, discipline, or unresolved conflict should not be turned into a public spectacle for the purpose of punishment, embarrassment, or gathering social pressure against a person.

Correction should ordinarily remain as private as the circumstances reasonably allow. Broader disclosure may sometimes be necessary for safety, accountability, legal responsibility, or truthful public communication. When disclosure is necessary, it should remain proportionate to the legitimate purpose.

Good faith concerns should be heard respectfully even when they later prove mistaken. Knowingly false accusations, malicious rumor, character assassination, and deliberate misuse of a conflict process are also inconsistent with Christian responsibility.

13.10 Leadership During Conflict

Hosts, elders, deacons, teachers, and others entrusted with responsibility should take particular care during conflict. Their position should not be used to settle personal disputes in their own favor, silence criticism, or recruit Participants into personal loyalty.

Where a person in leadership is directly involved in the dispute, another trusted person may appropriately assist. A leader should be willing to step back from a particular decision where personal involvement makes fair judgment difficult.

Leadership should make accountability more possible, not less. Concerns about the conduct of a trusted person should be capable of being raised without treating that concern itself as disloyalty.

13.11 Separation Without Hostility

Not every disagreement can be resolved within one continuing fellowship. A Participant may decide to leave, or Participants may conclude that a particular arrangement can no longer continue peacefully and faithfully.

Where separation becomes necessary, Christians should seek to part without unnecessary hostility, spiritual threats, retaliation, public denigration, or attempts to destroy one another's relationships. Leaving a particular Proximity Fellowship should not ordinarily be described as betrayal, rebellion, or departure from Christ.

Separation may sometimes be the wiser boundary when trust has broken down or convictions can no longer be carried together. It need not erase every possibility of future goodwill, prayer, or Christian regard.

13.12 Learning From Difficulty

Significant difficulty can reveal weaknesses that were not visible before. After conflict, a fellowship should be willing to consider what can be learned about its communication, expectations, leadership, safeguarding, distribution of responsibility, or local practices.

Learning does not require turning every painful event into another permanent rule. Sometimes the wiser response is a clearer conversation, a better boundary, a changed responsibility, or a temporary local arrangement rather than an additional standing requirement for everyone.

The aim is growth in faithfulness. A Framework cannot prevent every mistake. It can help imperfect Christians respond to difficulty with greater truth, wisdom, justice, mercy, and love under Christ.

PART IV

Local Christian Freedom

The Articles in this Part protect the substantial freedom intentionally left to local Christians. That freedom exists within the common Christian foundation and the Constitutional Requirements already established. What the Charter leaves open should remain genuinely open, and what the Charter establishes as a boundary should remain clear.

Article 14. Legitimate Christian Diversity and Local Discernment

14.1 Unity in Christ Without Uniformity

Proximity Fellowship seeks unity in Christ without manufactured uniformity. Christians do not need to become identical in every theological interpretation, church tradition, cultural expression, or local practice before they can gather together faithfully.

The common Christian foundation provides sufficient ground for fellowship while leaving room for meaningful differences beyond it. Diversity that can be carried faithfully within the Framework should not be treated as a defect merely because it is visible.

Unity should therefore be sought through shared allegiance to Christ, attention to Scripture, love, truthfulness, patience, and mutual responsibility rather than through pressure to reproduce one person's preferred form of Christianity.

14.2 Different Christian Traditions

Participants may come from Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Reformed, evangelical, independent, and other Christian traditions. A Participant is not required to abandon or conceal an ecclesial identity merely in order to participate.

Proximity Fellowship itself is anchored in the historic Protestant Christian tradition as stated in Article 1. That theological location should remain clear. It does not require every Participant to become Protestant, nor does it require the Framework to pretend that Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and other Christian traditions hold identical understandings of Scripture, authority, sacraments, ministry, or doctrine.

Clarity and hospitality can exist together. Christians may enter fellowship honestly without requiring either the Framework or the Participant to conceal where each stands.

14.3 Theological Differences Beyond the Common Foundation

Beyond the Foundational Christian Confession, Participants may hold different convictions on many theological questions. These may include baptism, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, church government, predestination, the detailed order of salvation, creation models, theories of atonement, forms of worship, and the timing and manner of events surrounding Christ's return.

Such differences may be held seriously. Proximity does not ask Participants to become indifferent to theology or to treat every interpretation as equally persuasive. Convictions may be taught, discussed, examined, and challenged with appropriate humility.

Where the Charter has not made a matter part of the common foundation or a Constitutional Requirement, disagreement on that matter should not automatically become a test of Christian legitimacy within Proximity Fellowship.

14.4 Matters the Charter Leaves Open

A matter is genuinely open within Proximity when the Charter neither includes it in the Foundational Christian Confession nor establishes a Constitutional Requirement governing it.

Open matters may be addressed locally according to Scripture, Christian conviction, conscience, prayer, wisdom, circumstances, and applicable law. A local fellowship may develop a practice that serves its Participants well without presenting that practice as the universal position of Proximity Fellowship.

Local freedom includes the freedom to make real decisions. It also includes the discipline of remembering that a useful local decision does not become binding upon every other fellowship merely because it has worked well in one place.

14.5 Conscience and Mutual Accommodation

Participants should exercise Christian conscience thoughtfully before God and with serious regard for Scripture and the good of others. Freedom of conscience does not require every personal preference to be adopted by the fellowship, nor does shared fellowship require a Participant to surrender every conviction.

Where differing convictions can reasonably coexist, Participants should seek practical accommodation with humility and goodwill. This may involve explaining that a practice is optional, allowing a Participant to abstain, arranging different opportunities, seeking mutual agreement, or simply accepting that sincere disagreement remains.

Accommodation should not become coercion in either direction. A majority should not unnecessarily compel a minority in matters the Charter leaves open, and an individual should not insist that every personal conviction govern the whole fellowship.

14.6 Freedom Does Not Require Participation in Every Practice

A Participant should not be assumed to endorse or take part in every practice that another Participant regards as legitimate. Where a practice is permitted but not required by the Framework, a Participant may ordinarily decline to participate according to conscience.

Declining an optional practice should not by itself be treated as rejection of the fellowship, disrespect toward other Participants, or evidence of spiritual deficiency. At the same time, freedom to abstain should be exercised in a way that does not deliberately disrupt the gathering, humiliate others, or violate their dignity and safety.

The Framework seeks room for Christians to gather together without requiring each person to perform every permitted expression of Christian life.

14.7 Disagreement Without Contempt

Serious disagreement does not justify contempt. Participants should be free to state convictions clearly, ask difficult questions, challenge interpretations, and explain why they cannot share another person's conclusion.

Such disagreement should avoid mockery, humiliation, personal caricature, factional hostility, and the assumption that every difference proves bad faith. The strongest argument should not need cruelty in order to remain strong.

Christian love does not require silence, ambiguity, or surrender of conviction. It does require that another person's dignity remain intact even when the disagreement is substantial. Where continued fellowship becomes impractical, Article 13 provides room for separation without unnecessary hostility.

14.8 Diversity Within Constitutional Boundaries

Local Christian freedom exists within the constitutional identity of Proximity Fellowship. Diversity cannot be used to set aside the Foundational Christian Confession, the Constitutional Requirements, or the public integrity of the Framework.

Accordingly, a local fellowship may not use the language of diversity or conscience to redefine Proximity's biblical canon, present the Deuterocanonical or Apocryphal books as part of Holy Scripture in the name of the Framework, replace the marriage standard established by Article 6 with a contrary Framework position, disregard safeguarding requirements, excuse coercion or abuse, or otherwise contradict an express constitutional boundary.

A Participant may personally hold a different conviction on a matter where the Charter permits personal disagreement. That personal conviction does not automatically exclude the person from ordinary fellowship. Yet freedom of

conscience does not require Proximity Fellowship to enact that conviction as the public position or practice of the Framework.

Diversity within Proximity is therefore real and substantial, but not undefined. What is open should remain open. What is required should remain clear. In that balance, the Framework seeks unity without manufactured uniformity and conviction without coercion.

Article 15. Local Decisions, Practices, and Forms of Fellowship

15.1 Local Responsibility

Each Proximity Fellowship is primarily responsible for the ordinary life of its own gathering. Local Participants should take appropriate responsibility for meeting arrangements, schedules, communication, practical organization, distribution of responsibilities, local customs, and other matters that this Charter leaves to them.

Decentralization is not the absence of responsibility. The freedom to make local decisions carries the responsibility to make them carefully, honestly, and consistently with the Foundational Christian Confession, the Constitutional Requirements, applicable law, and the dignity and safety of those involved.

ProximityFellowship.org provides the Framework. It does not ordinarily direct the daily affairs of local fellowships.

15.2 Decisions Should Remain Close to the People Who Bear Them

Decisions concerning the ordinary life of a fellowship should ordinarily remain as close as reasonably possible to the people who will live with their consequences.

A matter should not be transferred unnecessarily to ProximityFellowship.org, another fellowship, or a distant authority merely because centralization appears more orderly. Local responsibility helps preserve both freedom and accountability.

Where a decision materially affects particular Participants, their experience and concerns should ordinarily be heard. Responsibility is healthiest when those who carry the practical consequences are not treated merely as observers of decisions made for them.

15.3 Shared Deliberation

Participants should ordinarily deliberate together about matters that significantly affect their shared life. Good deliberation seeks understanding before judgment, listening before conclusion, and sufficient clarity before action.

Prayer and attention to Scripture should have an appropriate place where the nature of the question calls for them. Participants should also be willing to distinguish theological conviction from personal preference, practical necessity from habit, and genuine principle from attachment to a familiar arrangement.

Shared deliberation does not require endless discussion. Its purpose is responsible Christian judgment rather than procedural perfection.

15.4 Consensus Where Reasonably Possible

Where reasonably possible, a local fellowship should seek substantial agreement before making decisions that significantly affect its common life. Consensus can help preserve trust, reveal concerns that might otherwise be missed, and reduce unnecessary pressure upon minorities.

Consensus does not mean that every Participant must agree with every detail before anything can be done. Nor should one person be able to prevent reasonable action indefinitely merely by refusing agreement.

The aim is not unanimity as an absolute rule. The aim is to make serious decisions with enough listening, patience, and mutual regard that Participants can understand how and why the fellowship has acted.

15.5 Other Fair Methods of Decision

Where consensus cannot reasonably be reached, a fellowship may use another fair method of decision that suits its circumstances. This may include a majority decision, agreement among those carrying a particular responsibility, or another method that Participants have reasonably accepted.

No decision-making method should be treated as spiritually infallible. A majority is not automatically correct because it is larger, and a minority should not be treated with contempt merely because its position did not prevail.

Methods should remain proportionate to the matter. A small practical question does not need the same process as a decision that substantially affects the identity, safety, finances, or continuing life of the fellowship.

15.6 Local Customs

A local fellowship may develop customs that help its Participants gather faithfully and consistently. These may concern meeting times, shared meals, prayer patterns, welcoming newcomers, communication, care for children, hospitality, or other ordinary features of shared life.

A custom that works well may be valued without being elevated into universal law. Length of use does not turn a local habit into a Constitutional Requirement.

Participants should remain able to ask whether a custom still serves the purpose for which it developed. Tradition can be a gift when it serves fellowship. It becomes burdensome when familiarity alone is treated as sufficient reason that it must never change.

15.7 Local Forms of Worship and Fellowship

Within the boundaries of this Charter, local fellowships may shape forms of worship and fellowship according to their Christian convictions, cultures, circumstances, and gifts.

One gathering may include singing, structured prayer, teaching, and the Lord's Supper. Another may be quieter and more conversational. A fellowship may meet around a table, in a home, in another suitable venue, or in a form that develops naturally from its circumstances.

Local freedom should not become competition over which form is most spiritual. The question is whether the form helps Christians gather faithfully under Christ, hear and respond to Scripture, love one another, and live responsibly together.

15.8 Local Leadership Arrangements

A local fellowship may arrange responsibility through a Host, several Hosts, elders, deacons, facilitators, teachers, stewards, other forms of service, or no formal titles where titles are unnecessary.

Article 10 provides the Framework's guidance concerning leadership. Local freedom does not permit leadership to become ownership, domination, or personal control. Whatever structure is chosen should serve the fellowship and remain consistent with the character, accountability, and safeguarding principles established by this Charter.

A local arrangement that works well for one fellowship does not become the required model for another.

15.9 Local Practices Should Remain Reviewable

Local arrangements should remain open to reasonable review. Participants should periodically be willing to ask whether a practice still serves the fellowship, whether responsibility has become unnecessarily concentrated, whether a recommendation has quietly become a rule, or whether a local custom has become more rigid than its purpose requires.

Review should not be understood as distrust of everything inherited. It is part of responsible stewardship. Healthy arrangements should be capable of correction before a crisis makes correction unavoidable.

A practice may be retained because it remains useful. It may also be simplified, changed, or discontinued where the Charter permits and experience shows that another arrangement would serve better.

15.10 Temporary Solutions Should Not Become Permanent Rules Without Need

A difficulty may sometimes require a temporary rule, special arrangement, added safeguard, or unusual division of responsibility. Such responses may be wise for the circumstances that produced them.

The existence of one difficulty does not mean that every future fellowship or Participant must live under the same response. Temporary solutions should not become permanent expectations merely through inertia.

When the reason for a special arrangement has passed, Participants should be willing to reconsider whether the arrangement is still necessary. Development should solve genuine problems without allowing yesterday's solutions to accumulate into unnecessary permanent rules.

15.11 Freedom With Responsibility

Local Christian freedom is substantial, but it is never freedom from responsibility. Participants remain responsible for the consequences of the practices, structures, and decisions they choose.

A fellowship should not appeal to decentralization as a reason to ignore foreseeable harm, financial integrity, safeguarding, lawful obligations, or the Constitutional Requirements. Nor should responsibility be used as an excuse to centralize matters the Charter intentionally leaves local.

Freedom and responsibility belong together. Local Christians are trusted to discern and act because the Framework expects them to exercise prayer, wisdom, conscience, humility, love, and mature judgment under Christ.

15.12 When a Local Fellowship No Longer Needs the Framework

A Proximity Fellowship may reach a point where the Framework is no longer necessary or useful for its continuing life. It may become part of another church or Christian community, adopt another lawful form, continue independently under another name, divide peacefully into other fellowships, or simply conclude that its season together has ended.

Such a development should not automatically be treated as failure. Proximity does not exist in order to make Christians permanently dependent upon Proximity.

Where a fellowship ceases using the Proximity Framework, it should represent that change honestly and cease presenting itself publicly as a Proximity Fellowship. Article 7 governs the public use of the name.

The measure of success is not whether a local fellowship remains attached to the Framework indefinitely. If the Framework has helped Christians gather faithfully, grow in maturity, and become less dependent upon a human structure, it has served its purpose.

The fellowship is the purpose. The Framework is the means.

Final Affirmation

Proximity Fellowship rests finally upon these convictions:

Christ is the Head.

Scripture is the norm.

No human being is indispensable.

The fellowship is the purpose. The Framework is the means.

May the Framework remain a servant.

May the fellowship remain Christ's.

May Christians draw nearer to Him and to one another.

Digital Resources

Publication links - not part of this publication's text.

Read Online

- [Proximity Fellowship Website](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship Charter](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship Quick Starter](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship: A Guide to Christian Practices](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship Seasons of Transience](#)

Downloads

1. **The Proximity Fellowship Charter**
[EPUB eBook](#) | [Print-ready PDF](#)
2. **The Proximity Fellowship Quick Starter**
[EPUB eBook](#) | [Print-ready PDF](#)
3. **The Proximity Fellowship: A Guide to Christian Practices**
[EPUB eBook](#) | [Print-ready PDF](#)
4. **The Proximity Fellowship Seasons of Transience**
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