



# **SEXUALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS**

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*2023-2024*

Messiah University's foundational documents articulate the institution's mission and identity as a Christian university. Because of that mission, we hold to beliefs and practices that are rooted in our understanding of scriptural teaching and the historic teaching of the Christian church, both broadly and of our founding denomination (Brethren in Christ) specifically. Therefore, we affirm Christian marriage to be the union of one man and one woman and that human sexuality should be understood within this framework. Because of this affirmation, premarital and extra marital intercourse and forms of same-sex sexual expression fall outside of God's design for sexual expression. As we embrace these theological truths that are foundational to our understanding of the gift of sexuality, we also recognize that applying these truths to a specific set of behavioral expectations for our community is challenging, but necessary.

## **SEXUAL BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS**

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It is expected that married students will honor their marriage vows by remaining faithful to their spouse.

While it may be appropriate for committed male/female couples to hold hands and even kiss, care should be given to avoid more intimate behaviors such as heavy making out or oral sex. Any intimate sexual behavior that would put individuals on a path toward intercourse should be avoided, rather preserving that for marriage. In this vein, it is never appropriate to 'hook up' or practice promiscuous sex.

Students who experience same-sex attraction or identify as LGBT+ are expected to refrain from "same-sex sexual expression" as it is embodied in culturally contextual practices (e.g., identifying as a couple or exhibiting expressions of physical intimacy).

It is important to note that Messiah University's behavioral expectations are related to same-sex sexual expression, not orientation. The University does not hold the view that it is morally unacceptable to experience same-sex attraction or to identify as LGBT+.

Students who identify as LGBT+ and join the community must agree to live by the behavioral expectations in the code of conduct while they are at Messiah. Likewise, students who identify as heterosexual must also agree to live by the University's expectations related to sexual behavior.

The University's Community Covenant states the importance of each person; that we are each to be valued and respected because we are each created in God's image. As such, Messiah University does not tolerate

harassment of any individual. Any reported incidence of sexual harassment or demeaning behavior based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation directed toward any member of the campus community is taken very seriously by the University administration and is dealt with immediately.

For more information, see the University's policy on Interpersonal Violence and Sexual Misconduct in this handbook. This can also be found at <https://www.messiah.edu/TitleIX>.

Students are also expected to refrain from using and/or distributing pornographic material. The University desires and is prepared to help students who are struggling with pornography. Students in need of help should contact the Engle Center for Counseling and Health Services or Campus Ministries for confidential assistance and support.

Students who are finding it difficult to uphold the sexual behavior expectations or who have follow up questions concerning the sexuality and relationships policy and sexual behavior expectations are encouraged to speak with the Vice Provost for Student Success and Engagement, Dean of Students, Teaching Ministries Pastor, Director of Counseling, Director of Residence Life, Residence Director or other educators within the Student Success and Engagement Division.

## **AMOROUS RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES**

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Amorous relationships between employees and students are prohibited. An exception to this policy may be an existing amorous relationship which predates an employee's or student's affiliation with the University. When Human Resources is informed of a failure to abide by this policy, such failure will be cause for disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment.

## **PREGNANCY**

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When an unmarried student becomes pregnant, the University seeks to respond redemptively. Both the father and the mother of the child are to be treated equally and both are encouraged to remain in school. Proper medical care is considered essential, as are appropriate emotional and spiritual support. Students who are dealing with a pregnancy are encouraged to discuss the pregnancy with a counselor or other

appropriate person. Responsible decisions for the care of all parties involved are encouraged and supported.