

Community Covenant

All of Life Under the Lordship of Christ

In the motto, “Christ Preeminent,” the Messiah College community affirms that life draws meaning from submission to Christ and service to others. Our philosophy statement affirms the triune God as the creator of all that is, the source of all truth. As beings created in the image of God, we have special responsibilities and challenges. In our community of believer-scholars we affirm the interrelatedness of what we believe, the way we live, and the way we learn. Our search for truth and commitment to Christ connect us not only to each other but also to God’s creation and God’s people throughout history.

Within this community, it is not easy to find the right balance of challenge and support for each individual. Personal freedom and community obligation sometimes seem to be in tension as individuals work to integrate belief and behavior. This growth producing process benefits from the dynamics of a diverse but concerned community, as well as the sense that the lordship of Christ and a commitment to being part of the body of Christ are key values to guide us.

With the task before us of searching for truth and promoting personal growth, we join together in the hope of achieving more together than we could separately. We agree to pursue the obligations and challenges of community membership with integrity, respecting our institutional heritage, and practicing biblical accountability.

Our submission to the lordship of Christ has many implications. Some of the primary implications can be seen in terms of benefits and responsibilities *based on our relationship to God, to his creation, and to the group of people who constitute the Messiah College community.*

The benefits and responsibilities of living under the lordship of Christ focus first on *our relationship to God.* We affirm that there is but one true God and that his Word is our guide for faith and life. Because of the importance of knowing God and his Word, we affirm the importance of the spiritual disciplines in corporate and individual life. Prayer, Bible study, meditation, fellowship, and group worship should be regular activities in the believer’s life. Because God is a faithful keeper of covenants, we affirm the importance of fidelity and covenant keeping in our relationship with God and in our relationships with each other.

Scripture guides us in knowing how to live out the impact of God’s grace in our lives. We are to honor and revere him in the way that we worship, serve, and enjoy him. As teachers and learners we see our activities as acts of service and honor to him. Because of the love which he initiates by grace, we respond in love to him and to those he has created. His love gives us a sense of meaning and intrinsic worth that goes beyond any earned value or identity.

The benefits and responsibilities of living under the lordship of Christ focus also on *our relationship to God’s creation.* As people created in God’s image we are to follow Christ’s example in preaching the good news to the poor, binding the brokenhearted, proclaiming freedom to the captives, and restoring sight to the blind. As those committed to living out the teachings of Scripture, we are to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. We are to bring peace and unity where there is conflict and discrimination. We are to respect people and to value life above material wealth. Because we see people as having intrinsic worth, we avoid gossip, manipulative behavior, and sexist or racist attitudes or behaviors, stressing instead integrity, commitment, and compassion in relationships with others.

This respect for creation also shows itself in our treatment of natural resources. As stewards we are to be faithful in preserving the environment and in maintaining the balances within the creation order. We are to use our intellect and creativity to preserve and enhance the creation, using its resources prudently in light of the uncertain limits to history and life as we know it.

The benefits and responsibilities of living under the lordship of Christ focus also on *our relationship to the group of people who constitute the Messiah College community.* We recognize that significant diversity exists within our community, bringing a richness that results from varying ability levels, backgrounds, and interests. That individual diversity, however, must come within the bounds by which the community defines itself. Individuals who join the community must also be willing to live with integrity within those boundaries if the community is to function. While acknowledging the difficulty of applying general principles to specific behaviors and contexts, we agree to the following guidelines as applied to students in the *Student Handbook*:

1. As a community we commit ourselves to academic integrity and excellence in a cooperative rather than a competitive environment. We strive to work together responsibly and honestly in exploring and understanding the world around us, searching for truth within all academic areas.

2. As a community we commit ourselves to expressing Christian values in responsible decisions and actions. While not all Christians agree about the application of Christian values to specific situations, we expect honesty in dialoguing about and applying Christian values to things such as the use of language, leisure time and entertainment options, observance of the Lord’s Day, and personal appearance.

3. As a community we commit ourselves to balancing personal freedom with concern for the moral standards of others. In addition, rules are designed to promote a campus atmosphere that is most conducive to personal well-being, corporate service, and the achievement of the College’s distinctives, goals, and educational objectives. Prohibitions about the use of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, and the abuse or unauthorized use of prescription or nonprescription drugs relate most clearly to concerns about personal well-being and the Scriptural mandate to care for our bodies. Gambling is prohibited because we want to be wise stewards of the resources entrusted to us by God.

4. As a community we believe that certain scriptural teachings apply to us as they have to all people in all cultures. Our lives are to be characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We are to use our gifts in doing such things as serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy. In contrast, we are to avoid such sinful practices as drunkenness, stealing, dishonesty, profanity, occult practices, sexual intercourse outside of marriage, homosexual behavior, and sexually exploitive or abusive behavior. Although wrong attitudes such as greed, jealousy, pride, lust, prejudice, and factiousness are harder to detect than wrong behaviors, both are prohibited as sinful and destructive of community life and of the body of Christ.

With this understanding of our benefits and responsibilities as members of the Messiah College Community, we covenant together as a community of believer-scholars to pursue the challenge of living out this document. We commit ourselves to pursuing the distinctives, goals, and educational objectives of the College. We commit ourselves to seeking increased understanding of the Christian faith and applying that faith to specific academic disciplines and world problems. We commit ourselves to encouraging growth in others by living as examples, applying our faith to personal lifestyle issues, confronting inappropriate attitudes or behaviors directly, and affirming the evidence of God’s work in others. We will strive to use our talents and time, both in and out of class, for the benefit of the community and the glory of God, working together to bring all of life under the lordship of Christ.