

# 2007-2008 STUDENT HANDBOOK

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## **MISSION AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES**

### **IDENTITY AND MISSION**

Messiah College is a Christian college of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. The College is committed to an embracing evangelical spirit rooted in the Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian Church. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.

### **FOUNDATIONAL VALUES**

The College motto, "Christ Preeminent," points to a full and rich understanding of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith relevant to every dimension of life. The phrase points to Jesus Christ as both "the ground for personal salvation and the pattern for life and service." Messiah College is committed both to the personal dimension of faith in Christ for the forgiveness of and deliverance from sin, and to the exemplary nature of Christ's life as a model for our own. Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life," is thus foundational to the College's life and mission.

Since its founding by the Brethren in Christ Church, Messiah College has affirmed a set of values derived from the Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan traditions of that denomination. These values have guided our efforts to keep Christ preeminent in the total life of the institution. The following five ideals summarize how Messiah College defines its distinctive Christian character.

#### **UNITY OF FAITH, LEARNING, AND LIFE**

This principle affirms the wholeness of persons and the unity of every dimension of life as revealed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It also emphasizes that all truth is God's truth, and thus avoids the creation of false dichotomies in thinking and in living. Messiah College affirms a unified Christian worldview and lifestyle that joins revelation with rational inquiry and that integrates believing with doing. Christian "calling" and vocation is accordingly broadly understood. All of our gifts, talents, and interests are to be nurtured as acts of praise towards God while serving humanity and all of creation.

#### **IMPORTANCE OF THE PERSON**

Every person of each race, gender, nationality, status, and position is to be respected and valued because each person is created in the image of God. Freedom and responsibility are primary characteristics of being human and we must take care to protect each other's freedom while encouraging responsible living. As free agents, individuals make choices that determine the contours of their lives and they bear responsibility for those choices. Individuals are accountable for their manner of

response to God's grace. Similarly, every person must be responsible in their pursuit of truth, and yet be free to develop their own understandings as they integrate their formal studies with their broader experience of faith.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNITY**

Our understanding of the Church as the body of Christ and our recognition of humanity's interdependence cause us to value community. In community, we voluntarily share our lives with each other, we care for each other, we rejoice and suffer together, we worship together, and we offer counsel to each other. While every community develops rules, in Christian communities such rules should always be humane, recognizing the impact they have on the lives of those affected, and should help us appreciate each other's gifts and talents. In any community there will be tensions that require mutual give and take, but a Christian spirit of care and support provides the security needed to accept one's own strengths and weaknesses as one also accepts the strengths and weaknesses of others. The ultimate goal of every Christian community should be to help us live more faithfully as disciples of Christ.

### **DISCIPLINED AND CREATIVE LIVING**

The mature Christian life is characterized by a delicate mix of discipline and creativity. We are called to a life of devotion and obedience to the Gospel. Such discipleship demands of us self-control and sacrifice and requires us to examine all our wants and desires in the light of God's holiness. The Gospel also calls us to celebrate the goodness of creation and to live our lives in active engagement with this ever-changing world in which God has placed us. In order to fulfill these tasks, we must be both creative interpreters of the world around us and creative actors in that world. Creativity and discipline are complementary characteristics of the mature, joyful Christian life.

### **SERVICE AND RECONCILIATION**

Central to the Gospel is the work of reconciling individuals with God, with each other, and with all of creation. God has called us to be active agents in this work as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit and bear the fruit of the Spirit within us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Prepared in this way, we are compelled to share the redeeming Gospel of Jesus with those around us; to build bridges of understanding and peace across the dividing lines of race, class, age, gender, religion, and ethnicity; to demonstrate the love of God in service to others; to open our hearts to the poor and needy; and to work for justice wherever injustice prevails.

## **COLLEGE-WIDE EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES**

Messiah College is dedicated to helping students blend faith with learning in service to the world. As a Christian college of the liberal and applied arts and sciences, Messiah College advocates a bold and disciplined exploration of the world and expects its students to both embrace and participate in that endeavor. At the same time, Messiah

seeks to instill in its students a sense of intellectual humility, recognizing that even the most learned persons have limited insight and therefore need the insights of others.

The paradigm under which Messiah's educational programs are designed is that of liberal education. By raising the right questions, exposing students to multiple perspectives, and encouraging critical thinking, Messiah seeks to enable its students to respond with maturity to the world's complexities. In addition to nurturing these intellectual skills, the College encourages its students to apply their knowledge to the needs of the world—as servants, as leaders, and as agents of reconciliation.

Messiah College offers two academic degrees: the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Science (B.S.). When combined with purposeful cocurricular activities, these programs of academic study enable students to gain a perspective of who they ought to be and provide them with the abilities to live effectively as intellectually competent, socially responsible citizens of the world.

Messiah College has a historic relationship with the Brethren in Christ Church. Now expressed in a covenant agreement, this heritage informs the College's programs and activities. The distinctives of this heritage, which is rooted in the Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian faith, include emphases on justice-seeking, peacemaking, reconciliation, evangelism, and service. Accordingly, the College encourages and prepares students to act as servants who extend the gifts of grace and peace to a broken world. The College also recognizes the need for each individual to appropriate the Christian faith and express that commitment in daily living within a community.

While we realize that learning is a life-long endeavor, Messiah College expects its graduates to have made progress toward the fulfillment of the following seven objectives (see "Objectives" below). From a practical standpoint, these seven objectives and their subpoints are both interdependent and overlapping, i.e., while they may be visualized discretely and assessed independently, they are nonetheless connected to one another in numerous ways and will often be pursued in multiple program areas. While the relationships between these seven objectives might be articulated in a variety of ways, they are listed and ordered with a particular rationale in mind (see "Rationale" on page 11).

Objectives:

**1. To develop those abilities essential to liberal arts education. These abilities include:**

- a. Thinking logically and creatively, analytically and synthetically, and abstractly and concretely;
- b. Reading, observing, and listening carefully and critically;
- c. Writing and speaking clearly and coherently;
- d. Appreciating the aesthetic dimensions of life;

- e. Functioning effectively in quantitatively and technologically oriented cultures;
- f. Accessing, evaluating, and using information effectively and ethically;
- g. Pursuing the process of learning as a life-long pursuit;
- h. Balancing commitment with humility.

**2. To gain knowledge common to liberal arts education. This includes:**

- a. Developing basic understanding of geographical, social, political, and religious realities throughout the world;
- b. Learning significant aspects of the Western social, cultural, political, religious, and philosophical heritage;
- c. Learning significant aspects of at least one non-Western culture;
- d. Becoming aware of how people of different cultures perceive the world, interpret reality, and make meaning;
- e. Learning the methods, philosophies, and basic principles of the mathematical, natural, and social sciences;
- f. Learning the traditions and methods of the arts and the humanities;
- g. Making connections (i.e., probing relationships, including congruencies and contradictions) between learnings acquired in a–f above.

**3. To become biblically literate and theologically reflective. This includes:**

- a. Developing knowledge of and about God as revealed in Jesus Christ;
- b. Gaining knowledge of the Bible's content and themes, including the biblical witness on service, leadership, and reconciliation;
- c. Learning about historic Christian beliefs, practices, and ecclesiastical expressions, and the particular emphases of the Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan traditions;
- d. Becoming familiar with contemporary theological dialogue and biblical scholarship;
- e. Recognizing the influence of culture upon the Christian faith, and appreciating the insights that other cultures contribute to Christian theology and practice;
- f. Acquiring the ability to articulate and evaluate one's faith;
- g. Exploring various connections between faith and learning.

**4. To attain specialized knowledge and abilities in at least one area of study. This includes:**

- a. Understanding the foundational content and philosophical assumptions of one's specialized area of study;
- b. Engaging in scholarship in one's specialized area of study;
- c. Developing proficiency in one's specialized area of study sufficient to pursue a career and/or continue education at the graduate level;
- d. Gaining an awareness of options for employment, voluntary service, and/or graduate education in one's specialized area of study;

- e. Articulating how faith connects to one's specialized area of study and to potential career options in that area of study.

**5. To develop an understanding of one's identity and Christian vocation. This includes:**

- a. Developing an awareness of and concern for the whole person, including physical, emotional and spiritual wellness;
- b. Acquiring an appreciation for how one's faith, community, and culture impact one's identity and sense of meaning;
- c. Developing a sense of vocation that includes but transcends career choice;
- d. Gaining a realistic sense of one's distinctiveness, including one's interests, abilities, and limitations;
- e. Discerning and reflecting on the role(s) one assumes in groups, including one's faith community.

**6. To develop the intellect and character necessary to express Christian commitments in responsible decisions and actions. This includes:**

- a. Developing individual and corporate spiritual disciplines that nurture personal faith and compassion for others;
- b. Assessing cultural values and ethical traditions in light of the biblical witness;
- c. Applying the insights of Christian theology and ethics to complex social and personal issues;
- d. Understanding the nature and causes of violence in the world and the means for promoting peace;
- e. Recognizing the implications of living in an increasingly interdependent world;
- f. Evaluating institutional policies and social/cultural practices on the basis of whether they promote peace, justice, and reconciliation;
- g. Gaining an appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity.

**7. To become servants, leaders, and reconcilers in the world.**

**This includes:**

- a. Practicing a lifestyle based on Christian commitments;
- b. Developing a sense of civic responsibility and commitment to work with others for the common good;
- c. Developing the courage to act responsibly and redemptively in a complex world;
- d. Practicing good stewardship of economic and natural resources;
- e. Acting in ways that respect gender, cultural, and ethnic diversity;
- f. Making decisions that reflect an ethic of service, a concern for justice, and a desire for reconciliation;
- g. Recognizing the relevance of Christian faith to all of life.

**Rationale:**

**Objective 1** pertains to *abilities, competencies, and intellectual orientations* that Messiah College aims to instill in all of its students.

**Objectives 2 and 3** pertain to *bodies of knowledge and issues related to those bodies of knowledge* that Messiah College wants all its students to become familiar with. Objective 3 deals with knowledge that is more explicitly and distinctly Christian.

**Objective 4** pertains to the *specialized knowledge and abilities* each student will acquire by pursuing a particular major. In a certain sense, Objective 4 relates to all students (“common learning”), since all students will be required to pursue a major. But the content of those majors will vary widely as students prepare themselves to pursue their particular vocations.

**Objective 5** pertains to the *personal (though communally sensitive)* appropriation of the knowledge gained via Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4. In other words, Objectives 1 through 4 provide students with the intellectual framework by which to reflect upon their own selves, including their personal abilities, preferences, limitations, and callings.

**Objective 6** pertains to *students’ development as ethical beings*. At Messiah College, ethical reflection is rooted in Christian value assumptions, and it demands both character formation and a thorough understanding of the world (i.e., ethical reflection demands the competencies cited in Objective 1 and the knowledge base outlined in Objectives 2 through 5).

**Objective 7** pertains to empowering students to *act upon their knowledge*, utilizing the tools they’ve gained via meeting Objectives 1 through 6. Messiah College is committed to preparing students for “lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.” Objective 7 assumes that knowing the good (expressed primarily in Objective 6) must be accompanied by doing the good.

## **STATEMENTS OF FAITH**

The College affirms two statements of faith. The Confession of Faith expresses the faith orientation of the College in a nonsectarian manner that highlights the specific emphases of the Anabaptist, Pietistic, and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian faith. It is included frequently in campus worship services. As the oldest and most widely used statement of Christian faith, the Apostles’ Creed expresses the essential core of Christian commitment at the College. Trustees, administrators, and educators are expected to support the College Confession of Faith and affirm the Apostles’ Creed.

### **THE APOSTLES’ CREED**

I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again,  
ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

### **CONFESSION OF FAITH**

We believe in the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—who created and sustains the universe, and who desires to redeem us and all creation.

- God creates each of us in the very image of God to live in loving relationships: free, responsible and accountable to God and each other for our decisions and our actions.
- God speaks to us in many different ways, times, and places but is uniquely revealed to all the world in Jesus of Nazareth who was fully human and fully divine.
- God forgives our sins, renews our hearts and minds, and calls us to join in the work of reconciliation by grace through faith in the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- God bestows on us the Holy Spirit who leads us to repentance, instructs us in righteousness and empowers us to live joyfully as disciples of Christ, as servants of others and as caretakers of the created order.
- God calls us to unite in the Church as a visible community of believers which celebrates God's grace in its worship and bears witness to the truth of the Gospel through its being, doing, and speaking.
- God gives us the Bible as the inspired, trustworthy and authoritative Scripture to reveal God's ways and purposes, to nourish our minds and souls, and to instruct us in how we ought to think and to live.
- God instructs us to pursue the kingdom of peace, righteousness and justice which ultimately will prevail with the return of Christ and assures us that those judged faithful will share resurrected life with God and all the saints forever.

We praise the one God—our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer—who has called us to personal faith and new life in Christ and to so order our lives that they may demonstrate the truth of our confession.