



Essential Commitments

Messiah University's

- ♦ *identity and mission*
- ♦ *statements of faith*
- ♦ *foundational values*
- ♦ *community covenant*
- ♦ *educational objectives*



Identity & Mission

Three statements best describe the identity and mission of Messiah University:

- Messiah University is a Christian university of the liberal and applied arts and sciences.
- The University 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 University motto, “Christ Preeminent,” points to Jesus Christ as both the ground for personal salvation and the pattern for life and service. Since its founding, Messiah University has affirmed a set of values derived from the Anabaptist, Pietist and Wesleyan traditions. The following five ideals summarize how Messiah University 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 University 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 toward God while serving humanity and all creation.

Importance of the Person

Every person is to be respected and valued, regardless of gender, race, nationality, ability, status or position, 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 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.

Educational Objectives

While we realize that learning and personal growth are lifelong endeavors, Messiah University expects its graduates to have made significant progress toward the fulfillment of the following objectives:

1. To develop those abilities essential to liberal 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. Embracing the process of learning as a lifelong pursuit;
- h. Balancing commitment with humility.

2. To gain knowledge common to liberal 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 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 commitment 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, culture 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.

Statements of Faith

Messiah University was founded by educators with strong denominational concerns, but it has never been narrowly sectarian. We welcome students without regard to denominational affiliation. The University follows the historic Christian tradition and has adopted The Apostles' Creed as an expression of the essential core of Christian commitments at the University. In campus worship services, the University also frequently uses a Confession of Faith which expresses the faith orientation of the University in a nonsectarian manner, highlighting the specific emphases of the Anabaptist, Pietist and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian faith.

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.

Community Covenant

In the motto, "Christ Preeminent," the Messiah University 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.

Freedom and Obligation

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.

Benefits and Responsibilities

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 University community.

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

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.

RELATIONSHIP TO CREATION

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.

RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE

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 University 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.

Practical Implications

While acknowledging the difficulty of applying general principles to specific behaviors and contexts, we agree to the following guidelines:

INTEGRITY AND EXCELLENCE

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.

CHRISTIAN VALUES

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.

CORPORATE GUIDELINES

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 University's distinctives, goals and educational objectives.

SCRIPTURAL GUIDELINES

As a community we believe 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 sinful or unhealthy practices as articulated in the University's Student and Employee Codes of Conduct.

Corporate Covenant

With this understanding of our benefits and responsibilities as members of the Messiah University 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 University. 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.



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